

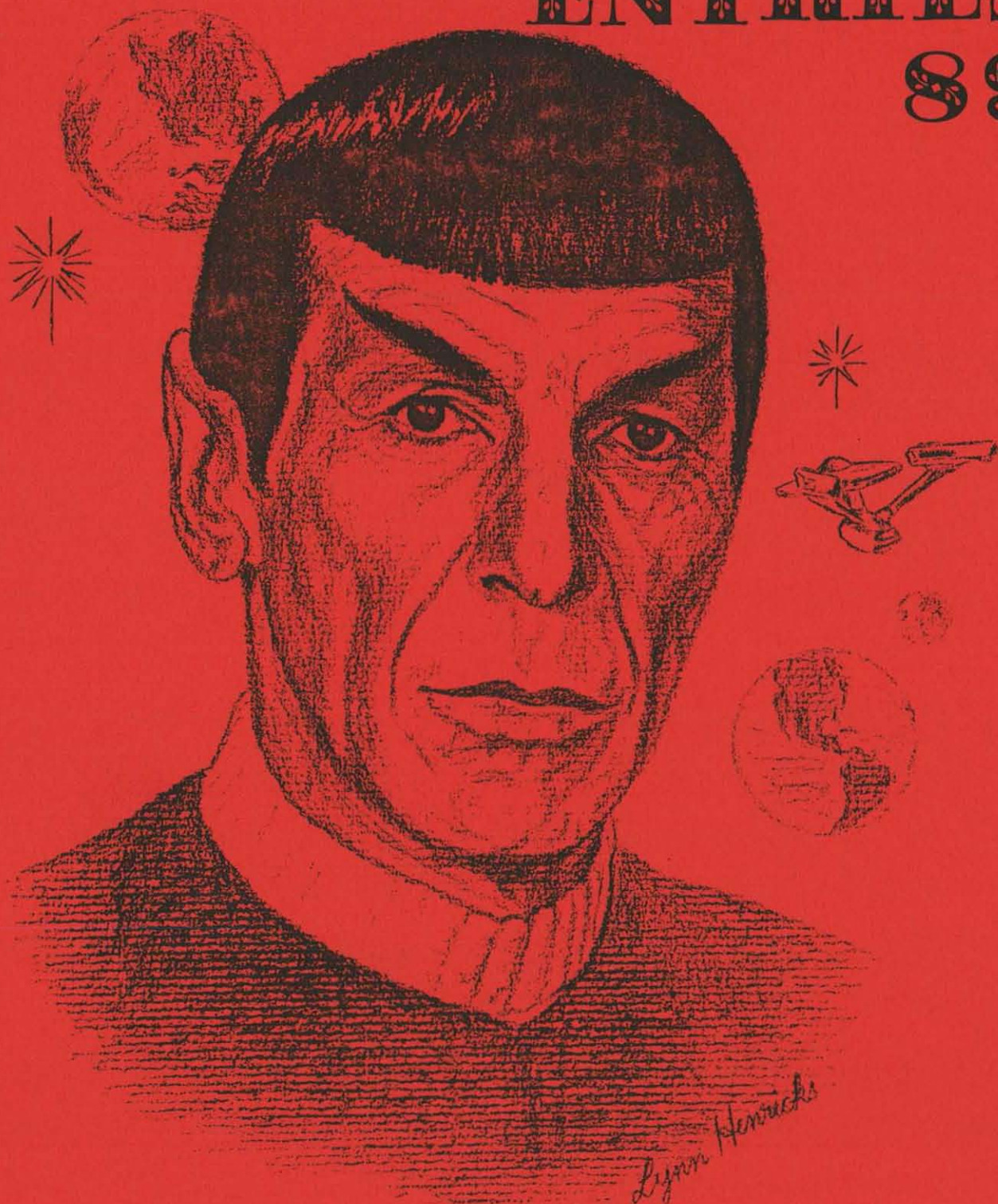
ENTERPRISE

SciFypress

LOG

ENTRIES

89



*a
Star Trek
fanzine*

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ScoTpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton & Shona

Hello, and welcome to Log Entries 89.

We must apologise for a mistake in the last issue of Log Entries, when the story 'Fever', by Maggie Edwards, was wrongly attributed to Maggie Symon. We're not sure how this happened, but we think it must have been during the transfer of material between Sheila and Valerie. Our apologies to both writers.



YESTERDAY'S AFRICA

by

Sherry Golding

Captain's Log, Stardate: unknown. For two months now we have been cruising around the same area of space, seeing the stars and the same planet, Xenos 2. There is no purpose, no known reason why Starfleet has asked us to remain here. My crew is restless and bored but my main concern is Uhura. Over the past two months she has become a different person - moody, snappy and almost irrational. Yet I am unable to find the reason why. Dr McCoy calls it stress and in a way I can almost understand why, for even I am beginning to feel irritable. It is this stretch of space, that planet, those stars. You almost get to feel this is a prison of some kind. I long to see home, another planet, alien life forms, anything but this. Anything to assure me that there is still something out here for us. Uhura has been affected badly, something I didn't quite expect, but do I really expect too much from her? Do I really believe that she is not as vulnerable as most other women I have met?

Captain Kirk turned to look at his Communications Officer. She was sitting in silence, as she had always done since Kirk had known her, but her face appeared angry and she was tapping a pencil on the panel beside her. Not softly, but with aggression. The aggression seemed powerful, rising, rising. She turned sharply, as did the rest of the crew on the bridge, even although he had not asked for their attention. The boredom was great.

"What?" Uhura snapped, and Kirk was taken aback. For her to talk to him in that tone in front of his crew -

"Uhura, it's time for your lunch period. Take it," Kirk said almost coldly, trying hard to ignore Uhura's attitude.

"I was quite aware of my lunch break, Captain. If I wanted to take it I would have done so," she replied just as coldly, her face almost snarling, and for a moment Kirk could not believe how ugly she suddenly appeared. He felt anger rising within him, an urge to reach out and shake her, but for the sake of his own reputation he controlled himself. He had to act like a sensible, mature Captain. Choking on his words, he said as softly as he could, "That's an order, Uhura."

"It is not written in Starfleet regulations that a Captain must order his crew to eat," Uhura said in a bitchy voice and Kirk turned to face Spock, who had just raised an eyebrow.

"Spock," he said slowly, "escort Uhura to the ship's canteen."

"Yes, Captain," Spock said, approaching Uhura. She stood up with aggression, her face angrier than before, and Spock stopped, studying her curiously. But without a word she stormed into the turbolift and was gone, leaving behind the tension she had created.

"I believe, Captain, that you have a problem," Spock told Kirk, as if Kirk had not known.

Kirk frowned and then seated himself in his Captain's chair. Wiping some sweat off his forehead, he looked again at the starlit universe. Why had Starfleet kept them here? Why? Would there be an answer at the end of all this or was it that Starfleet had no assignments to give? Was it possible, though, that not one planet, not one ship in the entire galaxy needed their help? That with all the billions of planets still unexplored and new universes to be discovered, Starfleet did not even have one assignment? Not even one? How was that possible? How?

Kirk shrugged. If his orders were to stare at Xenos 2 and its stars, then what was the point in trying to find the answer? There *was* no answer but to accept what Starfleet had ordered him to do.

That evening the nightmare returned and her confusion grew. All around her were African warriors dancing, dancing. Although it was only a nightmare, she could hear drums and singing becoming so loud that it was as if she was really there. A tall African wearing leopardskin clothes and holding a long, ivory stick was coming towards her, closer, closer. He laughed and the laughter echoed with the thunder, sending a chill up her spine. Suddenly, another African man was screaming with no reason. There was no danger facing him, nothing which would have terrified him, yet for no reason he had fear written all over his face. Madness seized him, destroying his mind, turning him into nothing more than a cabbage. The ground opened up and an open grave faced him. A violent force lifted him off the ground as easily as the wind would have lifted a light leaf. He was hurled into the deep hole as lightning ripped across the sky. Suddenly the drums, the singing, the tall African had gone. Only the man in the grave remained. Wind whistled through the village throwing huts in the air, and the man screamed as the dirt belted him, suffocating him, taking his life away from him. Uhura screamed and woke.

Dr McCoy poured Kirk a drink and seated himself. "Try it, Jim. It's a new drink. They call it paparadus."

Kirk looked at him, an amused look on his face. "Paparadus. Are you having me on, Bones? Been thinking up meaningless names again? Are you really that bored?"

"Well, what do you think, Jim?" McCoy asked with a grumpy tone.

Kirk looked at him and then smiled, "I think you don't miss seeing other planets, Bones. You yourself said you don't like beaming all over the place, the scrambling of your -"

"Jim, try the paparadus," McCoy urged, smiling warmly.

Kirk looked at him again and shrugged. "Oh well," he said and took a sip.

"Well?" McCoy smiled.

"Well what, Doctor?"

"Well, what do you think?"

"It tastes like whisky," Kirk said, looking slyly at McCoy.

McCoy rolled his eyes. "Well, I tried."

"Bones, about Uhura - "

McCoy leaned forward, a look of concern on his face. "Yes, Uhura. I'm particularly worried about her, Jim. She has come to see me about the nightmares she keeps having. She wanted a remedy to stop them."

"Nightmares?" asked Kirk, leaning forward.

"Why yes, she - "

"Her friend in that fire, the - "

"No, Jim. Much different. It has nothing to do with her past. In fact, it has nothing to do with her at all, yet it returns every night, the same meaningless nightmare, the same - "

"Bones, what did she tell you?" Kirk asked with impatience.

"She sees Africa, Jim. Africans dancing, witch doctors calling, a man dying. Why she dreams it, I don't know; I wish I did. I'd like to help her, she's a fine woman. No-one could replace her."

"McCoy, could she have read about it, perhaps?"

"No, Jim."

"How can you be so sure? Why? Explain."

"She said she heard a name, Jim. Zimbabwe. And no, we don't have any tapes on the place. She couldn't have read about it, it's not possible."

"Zimbabwe?" asked Kirk with surprise. "Isn't that where no foreigner is allowed to go unless he has full permission from the leader himself?"

"It is."

Kirk looked confused. "Why is she dreaming of a country which means nothing to her, one she has never even visited?"

"I wish I knew, Jim." Kirk looked at him and McCoy shrugged. "I'm sorry Jim. I just don't have the answer."

Kirk sat back in silent thought.

On the following day came a change.

"Captain, there's a small ship straight ahead!" exclaimed Sulu, raising his voice in excitement. "Approximately one - "

"I see it," Kirk interrupted. "Spock?"

"It's unlike any other ship I have encountered, Captain. I'm picking up a signal - "

"Uhura?" Kirk said, turning to face her.

"The Commander wishes to beam aboard, and is asking for your permission," Uhura replied coldly.

"Spock, sort out the co-ordinates. Uhura, tell him I will be pleased to welcome him aboard the Enterprise. I will meet him in the transporter room."

"Yes, as you wish," she replied with no enthusiasm. Kirk stepped into the turbolift.

An elderly black African, wearing a leopardskin suit and a crocodile-skin tie, materialised on the transporter platform.

Kirk, surprised, watched as the man came forward.

"I am Sixpence Chikawara. I have something very important to tell you," he said in perfect English.

Still dumbfounded, Kirk stared at the man for a few seconds before saying, "Yes, Mr Sixpence, please come with me."

Turning to Scotty, he said, "Ask Spock and Dr McCoy to meet us in the briefing room."

"Aye, Captain," said Scotty, watching the two men depart with amazement on his face.

The three officers sat watching Sixpence as he sipped at the coffee. After a moment Sixpence looked up. "Have you ever tasted Kenyan coffee?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied Kirk.

Sixpence shook his head as if in sorrow, then went on. "Captain, I came from Zimbabwe as soon as I received the sight from one of my spirit guides. I am a witch doctor of the Vashona Tribe."

"Sight?" asked Kirk, looking confused.

"I must begin with history, Captain. Many years ago, before the first white man, David Livingstone, explored my country, there was a witch doctor called Chairya. One fine morning, his son, who was on a hunting expedition, was killed by a man called Cheddar. It was an accident, but Chairya did not know that - or if he knew, he did not accept it. He put a curse on the thirty-four year old Cheddar and his family. All those within his family would die or go mad at the same age. Cheddar's family fled Zimbabwe to another land, but the curse remained. All the children this family bore had the curse upon them."

Kirk exchanged glances with McCoy and Spock. He leaned forward.

"Sir, what has this got to do with us?"

"Uhura, your Communications Officer, is part of that family, Captain."

Kirk felt as if he had just been dealt a heavy blow and Spock's eyebrow rose. "Fascinating," he said.

"What does all this mean? Are you telling us that Uhura is going to go mad or die?" McCoy asked with impatience and concern.

"You must go back in time. You must change history, change it so that the accident never happened, or she and the others who have yet to be borne by her sisters and brothers will die. History must be changed to prevent those who died before her from being killed by the curse."

"Sir, it is not possible to change history. It is incredibly dangerous," began Spock. "Should we change something which should not be changed, we ourselves may not exist."

"Nothing you do can endanger your own future, but it will save Uhura and all those who died pointlessly before her," Sixpence told him.

"What if we were to go back to your Africa of the past. What makes you believe we won't be changing history? You say that David Livingstone was the first white explorer. Surely we, who are white, will therefore change history," McCoy said, raising his voice.

"No, Doctor. You see, my people in the past, who are the spirits we talk to, tell of white gods and the warnings they gave of the bad white men who would one day rule Rhodesia. How do we know that these white gods they speak of, men from the sky, were not you?" Sixpence said.

"How do we know that these people whom we save will not change the future?" McCoy asked gruffly.

"Because they were all simple minded, Doctor and not important enough to make any major changes. It is important though that they live so that Uhura lives. The curse must never be made."

"Are you saying that Uhura is simple minded? What about her?" McCoy shouted.

"She's one of a kind," Sixpence smiled.

"Sir, why would you care for Uhura?" asked Kirk. "How can it help you if she lives or dies?"

"I help because the spirit has asked me to help, Captain. I do as the spirit tells me."

"For what purpose does the spirit help?" Kirk asked.

"He is Uhura's brother. He died last month."

Kirk looked at McCoy. "Bones, does she know?"

"I doubt it, Jim. He lived in Houston; she hasn't seen him for two years."

"She must know," said Kirk, "but not yet, not just yet," he added.

Turning again to Sixpence, Kirk said, "Sir, we will do what we can. Uhura is very special to us and we would like to help her. Please give Spock the date and the exact co-ordinates of the place."

"I shall also need a language tape of that period, sir, for our historical universal translator," Spock said.

Sixpence nodded.

Zimbabwe of the past was another time, a place unknown. The Starship Enterprise had gone far beyond the unknown, this time to a place where little history was known. Although it was only a few hundred years, the stars looked very young, the galaxy somehow different even although it could never change its picture or shape as easily as the Earth beneath it.

"Captain, the co-ordinates are locked in," said Spock.

"Where are we?" asked Uhura. "Why are we here?"

"Uhura, Spock, Sulu, come with me. Chekov, take the con and ask McCoy to meet us in the transporter room."

"Yes, Captain," said Chekov, sounding bored.

"Chekov, I'm sorry. Perhaps next time," Kirk promised.

"Yes, Captain," repeated Chekov, now sounding slightly depressed. He watched as the small party stepped into the turbolift.

"So how do you like that? We see the same stars, the same galaxy for months, and now we come to another time and still see stars and galaxy." McCoy looked around, becoming aware that no-one had paid any attention. "I'd better shut up or I may end up talking to myself," he said.

The sound of crickets, tall trees and the sight of Victoria Falls faced the landing party. Even before they had landed they had felt the incredible heat. Kirk grimaced as McCoy injected him with a powerful injection.

"Ouch," he said.

"Don't complain Jim. Don't want to go getting malaria, do you?"

"Fascinating, Captain, the beauty of those Falls. I actually find myself feeling strangely at peace."

"Of course you do, you green blooded Vulcan, the injection I gave you makes you feel calm."

Spock raised an eyebrow.

"Yes, Spock, yes, it is truly beautiful. Unlike any other place I have ever seen," Kirk said in a dreamlike voice.

"Captain, I do believe that a hundred years from now Livingstone will be standing where we stand now."

McCoy rolled his eyes. "Yes, and so begins racism."

"Correction, Doctor, Livingstone was only an explorer. It was Cecil John Rhodes who - "

"Why, Spock, I never knew you studied the history of this area," Kirk smiled.

"Indeed I did, Captain. Sixpence provided me with what I needed to know," Spock said proudly.

"Just think what the witch doctors can do, the magic, the - "

"Mumbo jumbo," McCoy said aloud.

"Really, McCoy. If you really believe that then are you saying that all the alien life forms we have encountered do not really exist? That what is not normal or that which no man has ever seen before, but which is there, is all mumbo jumbo, as you put it? Are you saying that Uhura's nightmares mean nothing at all, and that we should ignore Sixpence's warning?" Spock asked.

"Let's face it Spock, nightmares don't mean anything," McCoy argued, trying desperately to beat Spock's logic.

"Then why did she have them at all for so many nights?"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, please," Kirk laughed. Then, seriously, "We're here to complete a meaningful mission, a mission which could well save Uhura's life. We didn't come here to argue."

Silence.

Kirk turned to look at Uhura. "Uhura, are you all right?" he asked with concern.

"Captain. Sensors are picking up twenty natives, heading this way. They should reach us within twenty point two seconds," Spock interrupted?

"Put your phasers on light stun. Don't fire until I give the order," Kirk ordered.

The bushes in front of them rustled and a bird screamed in the blue Zimbabwean sky. The roaring sounds of the Falls echoed around them. A powerful force suddenly rushed towards them.

The natives had incredible speed, intensity on their faces, their fists tightly holding long spears.

"Fire!" shouted Kirk.

The phaser fire hurled some of them backwards, stopping the others in their tracks. For a while they stood there rooted, shocked looks upon their faces. Spock broke the intense silence.

"I am First Officer Spock of the Starship Enterprise. This is Captain Kirk, Dr McCoy,

Uhura and Sulu. We come only in peace. We must see Chairya, your witch doctor, immediately," Spock said using the historical universal translator.

Only silence greeted him, then a man spoke.

"You are gods?" he asked.

Spock exchanged glances with Kirk.

"Almost," Kirk replied. "We come from the future skies. We need to see Chairya."

Silence again. Then a man came forward. "Come with us," he said.

Kirk looked at Spock. Shrugging, he said, "Men, Uhura, let's go."

Chairya was young and strong. He had been born by Lake Kyle, where one day Kariba Dam would be built. He regarded the party with cold suspicion.

"You say you are gods?" he asked.

Kirk shrugged. "We are from the sky and the future, sir."

"Sir? What does that mean?"

Kirk looked dumbfounded and glanced at McCoy for an answer.

"It's a mark of respect when someone addresses a male of rank," McCoy explained.

"Yes," Kirk said, looking at McCoy. *Well explained*, he thought. Why hadn't he been able to think of something so simply put?

"You respect me?" laughed Chairya.

"Why not?" asked Kirk.

Chairya put his strong hands on Kirk's shoulders and Kirk felt as if he were being weighed down by a ton of bricks. His face reddened.

"You are all welcome. We have much to talk about. Sit, sit."

Kirk gestured for his men to sit and Chairya smiled.

It was evening. The Africans danced around the high orange flames, their feet rocking the floor, their drums loud and clear. Chairya chanted, his eyes looking at the stars above. How different those stars looked from the ground, Kirk thought. Beautiful. And those sounds - so peaceful. He looked at Spock.

"Captain, Chairya is calling to the spirits."

Kirk looked at the fire and smiled. Just to have got away from Xenos 2 proved to him

that life still existed after all. He looked down when he heard Spock using the tricorder.

"Fascinating. They are actually talking to other life forms, Captain. If you allow me to do so I would like to talk to them," Spock said.

"Go ahead," Kirk smiled.

"I'm going with you," said McCoy. "Wouldn't miss this opportunity for the world, Captain," he added. Kirk smiled in amusement.

"Who are you?" Spock asked a spirit. A blue cloud floated before his eyes, black eyes looking down at him.

"I am Mosi O Tunya," came the hoarse reply.

"Have you lived here before, sir?" Spock asked and McCoy rolled his eyes.

"A thousand years ago this country was an advanced civilization. Our war destroyed all the people and the land as we knew it. Everything they knew, all the technology, was destroyed along with them. I lived in that period. The land then was very much different, cities, computers... So different."

"We are sorry," said Spock.

"Why have you come?"

"To save the life of someone who is close to us."

"You come with many warnings," the spirit said.

"Yes, yes, one day Zimbabwe will be called Rhodesia. Many whites will be cruel to your people. They will be naive and they will not understand. Because they won't understand, because they will fear the unknown, because you will be so different, they will kill your people," McCoy began.

"We have foreseen another Zimbabwe, foreseen," Mosi O Tunya said.

McCoy smiled. "After much bloodshed and many misunderstandings, you will both learn to accept each other. Some of you will even grow to love one another as if racism and prejudice had never existed. They will not understand why they hated you. They will see that you are no different, that you are just as fallible and Human, with just as much purpose and feeling. One day, you will live with each other."

Spock raised an eyebrow.

"But only wars will help change the people's attitudes?" Mosi asked, with confusion.

"I'm afraid so, sir. Humans are very illogical," Spock said looking at McCoy.

McCoy gave him a dirty look and Mosi continued,

"My people were once superior and intelligent until that nuclear war. The war left a new land and primitive people - people so primitive that these other white people you talk of will be much more superior, when in fact my people were more so. When my people died,

only the children remained; all the adults died. These children fought to find food for themselves. Having no adults around, no-one to teach them, that is why they were primitive."

"Where did your people originate from?" asked Spock.

He received no answers, only silence.

Sulu did not see the snake until he stepped on it. Feeling something move beneath him, he looked down. He saw the snake lifting its angry head, its saliva dripping from its fangs. Even with all his martial art training, Sulu was unable to get out of the way. The snake shot forward, as swiftly as a moving bullet. Sulu felt a burning pain sweeping through his body and he screamed. Kirk came rushing over, concern written over his face as he grabbed Sulu by the shoulders.

"Snake, Captain, bit, bit me," Sulu cried, tears streaming from his eyes.

"McCoy!" Kirk shouted.

McCoy looked up, startled

"McCoy!" shouted Kirk.

He ran towards him, aware of Spock behind him. He knelt beside the screaming Sulu, his face sweating, his heart pounding.

"Snake," said Kirk.

"Did you get the snake?" McCoy asked.

"No," came the reply.

"Damn it, Jim, there's hundreds of snakes in Africa, I've got to give him the right antidote!" McCoy shouted as Chairya and some Africans surrounded him.

"Captain, I suggest the universal computer. When we put it on Sulu's bite, it will tell us the breed of snake which bit him," Spock suggested.

"Tell Chekov to send O'Neal down with it," Kirk said.

"You are not gods! Else how can he be dying of a snake bite?" Chairya challenged.

"This is all we need," McCoy grumbled when he saw the natives angrily flocking around, looking ready for war.

Kirk stood up. "Sir, like you, we can be hurt. Does this really give good enough reason to become angry, to prepare your men for a battle we do not wish to make?"

"You lied to us," snarled Chairya.

"No, sir, we told the truth," Kirk said. "Please, we come only in peace. We don't want pointless, unnecessary violence - we mean you no harm."

"I do believe they're not going to listen, Jim," Spock said, standing up.

An African rushed forward with the power of a rhino, but Kirk sidestepped and the man flew through the air, falling to ground like a rock.

As another two rushed in, Spock stunned them with the phaser. Another blue and orange light blinded the Africans and they backed away when they saw O'Neal standing there holding a small box. Their faces were shocked and Chairya looked at Kirk in amazement.

Kirk smiled in amusement just as McCoy snatched the box from O'Neal. After a second, he said, "Puffadder. Spock, ask Chekov to send - "

"Doctor, I know, I have been studying up on snakes and snake bites in Africa," Spock announced.

"Well don't just stand there you green blooded computer, get Chekov to send the bloody thing down, then!" McCoy shouted impatiently.

Dawn reminded Kirk of a beautiful planet he had seen two years previously. He and Spock had been delivering medical supplies and had been allowed to stay the night. He could not even begin to compare it with this one, however. He hadn't seen the red and yellow colours of dawn for two years. He suddenly realised he had missed it. He had never heard the sounds of crickets or the Falls roaring before. He certainly had come to an unknown place, a time period not yet explored by white men. The country had places still unexplored, places still undiscovered, but he had come here for Uhura.

He strode towards Spock and smiled warmly.

"Captain, we must find Cheddar, or else in two hours he will kill Chairya's son," Spock told him.

Kirk nodded as McCoy approached them.

"How's Sulu?" he asked.

"He's fine, Jim, but I sent him back to the ship."

Kirk frowned. Yes, it certainly was a beautiful country but in only a few hours they would never see it again.

McCoy touched his shoulder and smiled. Kirk smiled in return and then looked at Spock as Uhura came over.

Suddenly Spock looked very serious, his face actually showing fear, and Kirk tensed.

"Spock?" he said curiously and impatiently.

"Captain, I have miscalculated," Spock said, biting on his bottom lip.

"Explain."

"The time. I did not allow for our time differences," Spock said, his voice sounding

panicky.

"Spock, explain," said Kirk, tensing up even more.

"What I'm saying, Captain, is that the two hours we thought we had is - "

"How long, Spock?"

"Five minutes, Captain."

Kirk hurriedly talked into his communicator. "Chekov, plan the co-ordinates of where Cheddar will be when he kills that boy. Hurry!"

"Already plotted, Captain; will I beam you over?"

"Now," ordered Kirk.

A flash of fire transported them to another area as easily as if they had just said a single word.

The distance between them and Cheddar had also been greatly miscalculated. They could see two figures at a distance. Four minutes would not be enough time to reach them! In panic, Kirk rushed forward, sprinting so fast that the wind slapped him around the face. His heart thudded loudly and adrenalin rushed through his body, filling his whole body with energy.

Cheddar was raising his spear and Kirk shouted, knowing he would not be heard. He had failed. Uhura would surely die. His responsibilities as Captain, his care for his crew -

He almost cried, feeling the others behind him. Cheddar threw the spear.

"No!" Kirk cried. "No."

Suddenly, another figure emerged. Chekov! He took aim with his phaser and fired. The spear vanished as if had never been there. Kirk stifled a cry of joy, excitement soaring through his entire body. Uhura was suddenly herself again and as Kirk cuddled her, Chekov came running over.

"I told Cheddar everything, Captain; he's going to be careful from now on."

"Chekov, how - ?"

"I realised that my co-ordinates were... were... Well, Captain, slightly out of range. I ran to the transporter room as soon as I knew."

"Chekov, thanks," smiled Kirk.

Chekov looked confused. "You're not going to shout at me, Captain?"

Kirk shook his head.

"At least I have seen something better than what I have been seeing," said Chekov.

A shuttle, the shape of an oblong ball, drifted slowly through the air, coming to land at Victoria Falls. Kirk climbed out as did the others.

"Zimbabwe in the 23rd Century," Kirk told Spock.

"And unchanged, Captain, but for the space technology. As our world advances Zimbabwe remains primitive, almost as if they never wanted to change the beauty of their own country."

Kirk glanced at the Falls.

"Yes, Spock, that beauty is still very much the same as when we last saw it."

"Excuse me, Captain," Spock said.

"Where are you going?" Kirk asked.

"To talk with Chairya's spirit, Captain. We have much to discuss."

Kirk looked at McCoy and laughed.



TO US, OR TO YOU

To some I am Reality and Life;
 To others I am a Concept and Hope:
 I carry some through darkness to safety,
 I carry others through gloom towards the future.
 An Idea, a Truth, a Philosophy, a Dream.
 To some I give life: I am air, water, food.
 Others give me life: Thanks to those who created me.
 I soar in the minds and hearts of many
 Silver-Lit from without
 Silver-Lit from within.

I am the future, yet I am alive in the past to inspire.
 They find it so hard to accept Change, these beings I love
 Yet even my name stands for Change.

They must let go of things that hinder,
 I am not their foe.
 Though darkness is ahead again
 Human spirit will come to the fore.
 The future shall live
 And I, and my kind, shall breathe once more.



Fiona Campbell

NOT ALONE: ALWAYS CLOSE

by

Helen Cakebread

The Starship Enterprise moved through starry space. On her Bridge sat a man in a gold tunic. Captain James T. Kirk stirred, for once not really looking at the stars, his mind going over the same question. What were they doing here? He knew that his orders were to patrol the Neutral Zone, and not to leave the sector for any reason. He felt he had been set up, but why? The only thing he could do was to order star mapping and drills to prevent boredom setting in.

Kirk looked over to Spock's station. He missed seeing him there, but the Vulcan had other duties to perform, which kept his mind busy so that - Kirk hoped - he would not brood over what had happened.

Spock had received a message that while his father was en route to Vulcan his ship had disappeared; that had been three months ago, and there was still no word of his whereabouts. When Spock had informed him Kirk had tried to talk to him about it, saying that surely they would be sent to find his father. Spock had raised an eyebrow and said only that Sarek was only one man - and that he was alive somewhere.

Kirk pushed back his hair, signed the report, and logged himself off duty, heading straight for Spock's quarters. The door slid open as soon as he buzzed, and Kirk stepped inside. The room was so hot he could feel beads of sweat running down his face. He looked at Spock; the Vulcan was sitting at coolly his desk, his face rigid.

"How's the work getting on?" Kirk asked, trying to find a way through the Vulcan's shields.

"I have finished, and will now take my turn on the Bridge," Spock replied.

Kirk felt his anger flare. "Face up to it, Spock. He must be dead by now, so start putting your mind in order."

Spock rose and faced him. "You do not understand. He is alive, otherwise I would feel it through the parental bond. I have also had a message from my mother; she too believes he is alive - and she is Human."

Before Kirk could reply the intercom sounded. "Yellow alert! Yellow alert! Captain Kirk to the Bridge!"

Kirk headed for the turbolift, Spock at his heels.

As they emerged onto the Bridge the screen showed a ship approaching at speed and stopping. There were no markings on her, but she looked like an old cargo vessel.

"Message coming in, sir," said Uhura.

"This is the Maybell. We are beaming over the drugs you wanted. The price has been paid."

Kirk stared at Spock. "What drugs?"

McCoy, who had just arrived, shook his head.

"This is Captain Kirk. Who are you?"

"Please, Captain, we are wasting time. I'm sorry, I cannot tell you more. Please trust me."

Kirk pressed the intercom. "Mr Scott, transport now, but hold until we get there."

"Sir, she's moving off," Sulu reported.

Kirk nodded, and left the Bridge, followed by Spock and McCoy.

As soon as they reached the transporter room Scott operated the controls. A figure began to appear, and Kirk and McCoy stared in surprise.

Spock raised his hand in greeting. "Peace be with you, Father," he said.

Dr McCoy had checked Sarek out and reported him in good health, but tired; he released him to quarters to rest. There was no rest in the Captain's quarters, however, as Kirk faced Spock.

"You knew all along it was him. I thought we were friends - you could have told me." Kirk tried to hide the hurt he felt inside.

"Jim, I am sorry, but I was not sure. It was only as we drew nearer that the bond grew stronger, but anything could have gone wrong."

The intercom buzzed. "Kirk here."

Uhura's voice answered. "Captain, Sarek requests that you and Mr Spock join him. There is also a message from Starfleet. As soon as we pick up the drugs we are to return with them to Vulcan."

"We'd better go," Kirk said.

"Please sit down, James." Sarek nodded in greeting to Spock. "I am sorry that you were not told, but my mission could have placed many people in danger. I was offered the chance to go to Romulus, as the Praetor had just died and there was much talk about the Vulcan way. When I arrived I found that all those who supported my mission had been killed. As I was a guest the new leader would not, for honour, harm me, but he would not say when I could leave. Eventually a man in a dark robe came to tell me that I was to leave at once; only when we were on a ship speeding away did he tell me that the Enterprise would be waiting for me. No other words were spoken, and I never saw his face."

"So it was a wasted journey," Kirk commented.

"There may not be peace in our time, but one day it will come," Sarek said. "Now if you

will excuse me, I must rest."

They rose, but Kirk pushed Spock down again, whispering in his ear. Sarek heard him say, "Don't leave. Stay. He needs you as much as you need him. Make good use of this time."

Spock looked at his father. When Kirk had gone Sarek touched his son's face gently, and Spock reached up to rest his fingers on his father's face.

//Forgive me, my son. I know what you feel through the bond we share, and that you were trying to block the emotions coming from she who is my wife. You should have told James. He loves you as I do. Be gentle with him - you have hurt his trust.//

Spock felt calmer as he left. He would go and find Jim.

The ship was in orbit around Vulcan, and Sarek had just beamed down. Kirk was about to leave when the intercom buzzed.

"Captain, a message from Starfleet Command. Well done. New orders are coming through."

"Well I hope it's not more star mapping," said Kirk. "I could do with a holiday."

"We could always leave you on Vulcan and pick you up later," said McCoy.

"No thanks. Leave you two together? I wouldn't have a ship to come back to."

"That's not very nice, Jim. Eh, Spock?"

"I quite agree with the Captain. I do not want the ship on my own, and I would have no-one to play chess with," Spock replied.

"Uh-huh. Let's go."

As Kirk smiled Spock and McCoy both knew that without him the Enterprise would be like any ordinary ship.



She's a true Empath, Jim, a jewel so scarce and rare
Among the beings we've encountered. She has gifts beyond compare.
She feels the pain of others and helps them with her care.

Her help and care are treasures, look how she uses them.
She shows her care for others. See, their injuries she tends.
The name I gave her suits here. She really is a GEM.

Helen Connor

VULCANS NEVER LIE

by

Jean Sloan

Leonard McCoy was sitting in a quiet corner of the Rec Room sipping from a large mug of chocolate and watching a hologram of a Klingon battlecruiser attacking an equally realistic holo of a Federation starship. It said something about Human nature, he thought, that starship personnel on a peaceful mission of exploration should amuse themselves playing war simulations. Another favourite battle game was Klingons v Romulans, each simulation carrying the necessary measure of explosions, destruction and mayhem.

The Doctor's gaze wandered beyond the game to where James T. Kirk was sitting alone. McCoy had opted not to join him because of the expression of controlled irritation on the Captain's face. The Doctor was feeling mellow and relaxed, and did not, at the moment, want to be on the receiving end of Kirk's annoyance. He was not sure what was wrong, but Kirk had received sealed orders from Starfleet; it had to be something to do with that.

Spock entered the room and collected his meal. He cast about for a place to sit, then espied the Captain. After a moment's hesitation, while he presumably assimilated Kirk's demeanour, he walked purposefully towards the table.

"May I join you, Captain?"

"Of course, Spock. But I warn you, I'm not good company."

"Really, Jim?"

"Oh no, Spock. Not as bad as that, surely?"

"Well, at least three people have warned me to beware of you. Mr. Scott says you are in 'a wee bit of a snit.' I heard Sulu tell Chekov that you 'got out of the wrong side of the bed.' Uhura said you drummed your fingers and paced for the whole shift, and that I should be glad I was in the Science Labs. Oh, and Dr. McCoy is sitting over there."

From his vantage point McCoy could not hear the conversation, but he did see the tension drain away from Jim Kirk, and his sombre expression replaced by a huge grin.

Spock does it every time, thought McCoy enviously. He'd make a good psychologist.

Spock looked at Kirk questioningly.

"I can't tell you, Spock - Captain's eyes only - but you won't believe it when you find out what they've decided to keep a secret. It's so insignificant."

"I would guess, Jim, that it might be an inspection."

Jim Kirk's mouth dropped open.

"A routine inspection checking for anything illicit in the crew's quarters or elsewhere: whisky stills; roulette wheels; livestock; forbidden plants; smuggled Saurian brandy..."

"Spock, how did you... What have you been up to?"

"You might be forced to charge me if I tell you, Captain. Perhaps I read your mind."

"Spock, I could... kiss you."

"Not in front of the crew please, Jim. I presume you want me to conduct an inspection in, say, two or three days myself. I'll announce it. It will give the crew a chance to... er... tidy their quarters."

"Yes. Er... Spock, don't forget to mention to Scotty the still that he hasn't got in the Engine Room under the warp drive console."

"Or the ones he does not possess in the Hydroponics Lab, or on the Observation Deck in the meditation booth that is always kept locked because of a leak in the water pipe."

"So that's what the gurgle is."

"Captain, does Uhura still keep a tribble?"

"I believe she does, Spock. Oh, there's Sulu's plant. The one that tried to eat you."

"Yes, Captain, of course. Where does Jackson store his... er... salacious vid tapes?"

"I think they're in a gym locker - number 21 or 22. Don't forget the Syndicate's gambling accounts. I stopped them storing them in the Rec Deck computer - they transferred them to an old-fashioned ledger, of all things. God knows where they've put that."

"It's under the lectern in the Chapel, Captain. Leening thought it looked a little like a bible."

"For goodness sake get it out of there, Spock. Goodness knows how many beings would be offended if that were found."

"Er, Captain, there's a rather delicate matter. What about crew members who have moved in with other crew members for... er... biological reasons?"

"You mean people who have decided to live together. It's straightforward. If a change of quarters has been approved, then fine. If not, then boot them back to their own cabins. Get McCoy to do it for you."

Spock looked relieved.

"Oh, Spock."

"Yes, Jim?"

"Make sure that no officers, First or otherwise, are caught hacking into anyone else's computer mail during an inspection that they don't know about."

"Of course, Captain. I am sure no officer on this ship would do anything so rash, even if he or she wanted to know why someone else looked so very worried."

"Spock, I think we understand each other perfectly."

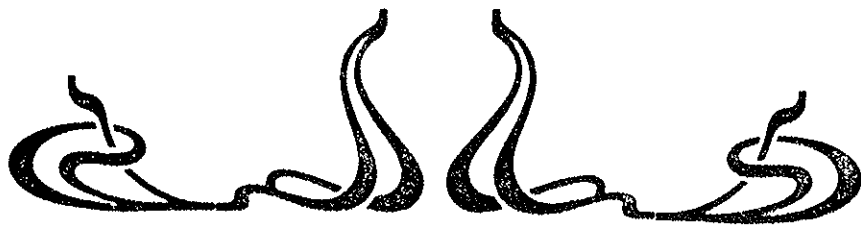
"Indeed we do, Captain. When, exactly, will Admiral Merryweather be arriving?"

"That's classified, Spock. But you will know the answer in exactly six days."

Spock finished his meal and left with purpose in his stride. There was much to do.

McCoy watched Jim Kirk, who was stretching, a look of contentment on his face. The crisis was obviously over, or averted. He got up and moved over to join the Captain.

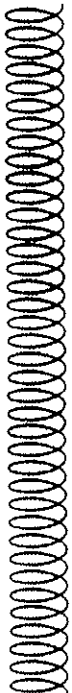
The Captain, for his part, was contemplating the widely believed myth that Vulcans were incapable of dissembling.



AMANDA

(Dedicated to Jane Wyatt)

Your name means 'worthy of being loved',
 And you walk in grace and beauty,
 With your hair of gold and eyes of blue.
 What was it that drew Sarek to you?
 A Vulcan raised in logic and duty,
 Surely, it wasn't just your Earthly beauty.
 What was it that made it 'the logical thing to do'?
 Whatever it was, the choice was mutual and you were wed,
 And you made the decision to follow wherever he led.
 You learned to walk two steps behind your husband,
 And willingly learned the duties of a Vulcan wife,
 So that when Sarek finally returned home to Vulcan,
 With you by his side,
 None could criticise his choice of a Human wife.
 You bore a son for your husband,
 And raised him in the Vulcan way.
 As the years passed you increased your knowledge
 Of Vulcan and its customs,
 And you have become admired and respected in your own right.
 For you are the Lady Amanda,
 Wife of Ambassador Sarek,
 And mother of Commander Spock.



El

Christine J Jones



LEGLSS

by

Sandy Catchick

"Medical Emergency!" The communication was broadcast shipwide. "Doctor McCoy to the Captain's quarters!"

In Sickbay a tired, middle-aged man detached himself from a whisky tumbler and fought to stand upright. Instinct led him to his medical kit and a sense of duty into the corridor. The message was repeated, this time more insistently. *S'funny. Shouldn't sound concerned. B'sides. That's Spock's voice. Blasted Vulcan. Wouldn't know what to do with a decent, warm feeling. Must be the whisky playing tricks on me.*

Common sense made him return to stick his head into one of the showers long enough to gain some semblance of self-control. As he made the short journey he cursed himself for a fool. A doctor had no business drinking - at least not while on duty. This was his first real test on board the Enterprise, and seemingly he was going to fail it. Just like he'd failed everything else since Sarah left him. He pushed these thoughts to the back of his mind, but one thought would not let him go. *Why did it have to be the Captain?* Even in his short time on board he'd come to like the young commander of the Enterprise. No-one could fail to like the man. He didn't want to let Jim Kirk down, but fate, as usual, had dealt him the wrong cards.

The swish of the doors alerted Spock to Dr McCoy's arrival, and the Vulcan smoothly got to his feet and stepped back from Kirk's prone body. McCoy, expecting a reprimand for his tardy arrival, failed to register the Vulcan's movement, except subconsciously. He fired questions at the First Officer to cover his own state of mind - and body.

"What happened? Were you with him? Can you tell me anything useful at all?"

A calm voice responded "Unknown, no and specify."

"Pardon?"

"Unknown, no and specify."

"Look, Spock, I asked you a simple question. Jim could be dying while you answer in riddles. Not that you'd care. It would probably leave you free to take on the captaincy. God forbid."

Spock was stung by the Doctor's remark. He forced down unaccustomed anger. The necessity reminded him how precarious his control was where James Kirk was concerned. He must avoid showing his feelings for the Captain in front of McCoy. The physician would never understand. Attempting to normalise the situation he replied, "I do not know what is wrong with the Captain. Mr Scott believed he was having problems with his legs."

"Mr Scott? Why isn't Scotty here if he found Jim first?"

"Mr Scott was not in a fit state to remain. I recommended that he return to his own quarters and offered to stay with the Captain to await medical assistance."

McCoy turned away from the stone face. He felt guilty about his words. Whatever he thought of Spock, he knew that the Vulcan had not acted in order to obtain the captaincy. That was unfair. If it had been anyone else he would have apologised, but Spock got his goat. The man would admit no feelings and went to great lengths to point out McCoy's own 'emotionalism' as the Vulcan saw it. McCoy decided the words couldn't hurt where there were no feelings.

He leaned forward and then knelt beside the Captain. A whiff of alcohol assailed his nostrils. He knew he shouldn't have been drinking when on call and cursed himself. Perhaps the Vulcan was right about his emotionalism at that. He wouldn't be where he was now if he hadn't let his emotions run away with him. He still wasn't sure why he'd accepted Kirk's offer to join the five year mission. Mind you, he hadn't known the mission would include looking after one know-it-all Vulcan. Then again, he didn't know what else he could have done. He'd had to accept. Now he was stuck for five years in this tin tub with a crew of over 400 military types while he was just a country doctor. As he berated himself he gently felt down each of the Captain's legs. He could find no breaks. Jim moaned softly, but didn't awaken from his semi-conscious state. McCoy was concerned at his inability to find the cause of Kirk's condition. He blamed his own mental state and cursed his need of the bottle. He wished the Vulcan wasn't standing there to see him like this. Belatedly he remembered his medical scanner.

As though to press the point Spock asked, "What is your medical opinion, Doctor?"

"I don't know yet, Spock. I'm not one of your computers. I can't find anything obviously wrong with his legs. What exactly did Scotty say?"

Spock considered a moment before replying. "His exact words were 'Mr Spock, the Captain needs your help.' He was apparently overwrought by the situation but I managed to press him for further details. He said, 'Doctor McCoy will be able to help him. He's legless.' I asked for further ..."

McCoy wasn't listening. "Legless!!!" He rose unsteadily to his feet. "Why you cold-blooded, conniving, underhand, double-crossing" Words failed him. "You never liked me from the moment I arrived, did you, Spock? I walked neatly into your trap, didn't I? I'll never live this down. Jim'll have my resignation in the morning. I'll thank you to keep this between the two of us - and Mr Scott of course." He moved blindly to the door, then turned back. "Oh, you'd better give these to Jim. He'll have the daddy of all headaches when he wakes up ... and I've a lot of experience in such matters, even if I do make a lousy ship's doctor. You disappoint me, Spock. I didn't think you'd stoop this low." He threw a vial of red pills at the Vulcan. Spock caught them reflexively.

"Give him two when he wakes up." So saying the Doctor fled back to Sickbay and his own bottle, avoiding looking at his protagonist. He didn't think he could bear to see satisfaction on that stone facade.

McCoy therefore missed seeing the effects of his tirade. Spock's mental defences had been lowered in an attempt to assist the Captain. He had not had time to reinforce them at McCoy's entry. The Doctor's emotions caused turmoil in the Vulcan's logical mind. The physical effect was sufficient to cause him to stagger, although he managed to remain on his feet. He had never before been subjected to such a confusion of self-hate, anger, fear, regret and most predominantly betrayal. It took him over a minute to subdue his reaction and bring mind and body under control. His first coherent thought was to wonder how the Doctor survived such strong and contradictory feelings. It was only then that he realised he had not understood the portent of the Doctor's words. He remained uncertain of the Captain's condition and alarmed at the Doctor's reaction. He assumed that McCoy would not have left if

Kirk's condition was critical. On reflection he decided he must wait for Kirk to regain consciousness.

Unsure whether it was safe to move the Captain, Spock settled for covering him with a blanket and settling next to him on the floor. The Vulcan kept his silent vigil for three hours and twenty-six minutes when Kirk began to show signs of regaining consciousness. His first words were, "Oooh, my head!"

Spock was surprised. "Captain, are you functional? I understood that you had hurt your legs. Captain?"

"Spock?"

"Yes, Captain."

The Vulcan eased the Captain's head onto his lap, unaware of the action. Gently he took a wet cloth he had prepared earlier and wiped it across Kirk's brow.

"How are your legs?" he asked solicitously.

"It's my head, Spock. It's twice its normal size."

"I assure you that is not the case."

"Spock ..."

Kirk lapsed into semi-consciousness before he could continue the conversation.

Spock was at a loss to decide what was best. Logically the Captain needed the services of a doctor. Swallowing his own pride Spock contacted Sickbay.

"Dr McCoy, please respond."

There was no reply.

"Mr Spock calling Dr McCoy. Please report to the Captain's quarters."

There was no response and the Doctor did not appear. Spock waited a further half hour. There was no sign of Kirk regaining consciousness. Spock checked him as best he could. He was breathing regularly, if a little fast, his face was flushed, and he remained unconscious. His Vulcan background did not give him sufficient knowledge to deal with the situation. He decided he needed help. If Dr McCoy would not help who could he ask?

It was easy to come up with the answer. Lieutenant Uhura. It was difficult to decide how to enlist her help without worsening the situation further. If he called her to the Captain's cabin it might do her reputation and the Captain's considerable good among the human crew, but he doubted the Captain or Uhura would thank him. He considered contacting her telepathically, but shied away from the breach of privacy that would entail. He had to think of a logical reason to call her.

"Mr Spock to Bridge".

"Bridge, Sulu here," came the almost instantaneous response.

"Is Lieutenant Uhura at her station, Mr Sulu?"

"Yes, sir".

"I require a tape I left at my own station. Instruct her to bring it to me in the Captain's quarters."

The Vulcan held his breath.

"Yes, sir." There was a moment's silence. "She wants to know if it's the one locked in your viewer, sir."

"That is correct."

"She's on her way."

"Spock out."

He heard a murmured "Don't say thank you" as the line was cut and raised an eyebrow at this further show of Human illogic.

Spock wondered how long it would take him to replace the data on that tape. Probably no less than 28 hours. A pity. However, it was a small sacrifice. Uhura's request for entry precluded more accurate calculations.

"Come," he said in his best command voice.

Uhura entered, then stopped in her tracks. She looked first at the Captain, then at Spock, who was still seated beside the Captain. It dawned on her that Spock had not required the tape.

"What's wrong, Mr Spock?" she asked, seeing the Vulcan's hesitation.

"I apologise, Lieutenant. As you have already surmised, I have not been entirely truthful with you. I need your advice." He stared hard at her.

Uhura remained unperturbed. She had time to look quickly around the Captain's cabin and to note the smell of whisky, the blanket covering the Captain, Spock's position on the floor and the general air of tension emanating from the Vulcan. Spock swallowed. She noted the signs of strain and decided to ease the situation.

"How can I help, Mr Spock?"

"I need to know what is wrong with the Captain."

"Didn't you call Doctor McCoy?"

"Indeed. He left these" Spock indicated the pills "for when the Captain recovers consciousness. I fear I have misinformed him about the Captain's symptoms. The Captain complained of his head, not his legs, when he came round. I advised the Doctor that the Captain was legless. The Doctor has ignored my attempts to contact him since. I do not wish to give the Captain the wrong medicine, nor could I leave him in this condition. Perhaps you could contact Dr McCoy?"

"Do you understand what it means, to be legless?"

A bowed black head shook in negation.

"I assumed it had something to do with the condition of the Captain's legs. He appeared unable to use them when I found him."

Uhura smothered a grin. "It means the Captain has had too much to drink."

Spock's head came up sharply. He realised he had been smelling whisky for some time.

"Indeed. May I ask another question?"

"Of course."

"The Doctor became angry when he was unable to discover the source of the Captain's problem and I advised him that Mr Scott told me he was legless. Please explain."

"Oh dear."

Uhura was torn between laughing and crying. Mr. Spock looked so forlorn sitting on the floor. She sobered quickly when she thought of the new Doctor's reaction. She had soon realised that he and Spock were complete opposites. She hardly knew the Doctor, but he appeared to her to be an efficient and caring physician. However, he seemed to have taken a dislike to the First Officer, never missing an opportunity to poke fun at him. Spock, to her surprise had never retaliated. The Doctor, too, had obviously expected retaliation, and no doubt thought this was it. How could she explain that to a logical Vulcan?

"I think he thought you knew what it meant to be legless, and that you deliberately called him out on a medical emergency knowing that the situation was not an urgent one."

"Illogical."

"No doubt, but very very Human. You and Doctor McCoy have not exactly got on since he arrived, have you?"

The Vulcan nodded assent reluctantly.

"I do not understand him and he does not understand me."

"He baits you, sometimes. I mean he tries to get you to react to him or to what he is saying."

"That is correct."

"The emotional reaction to that would be to play a trick back on the Doctor. That would be what a Human would do. Doctor McCoy just assumed you had acted Humanly. I think it best that you forget the whole thing. I'm sure it will blow over."

"And the Captain?"

"The best thing for him would be to put him to bed and give him those pills when he does wake up. If he has had too much to drink I'm sure he will wake up like a bear with a sore head."

"A bear with a sore head?"

"It means he'll have a pretty severe headache."

"So the Doctor informed me."

Uhura decided it was time to leave. "Do you still require this tape, Mr Spock?"

"No. My apologies again, Lieutenant."

"No need to apologise, sir. I was glad to help. By the way, I took the liberty of copying the tape before removing it."

Spock's eyebrows reached into his hairline in unison. 'A truly remarkable woman' he thought. Aloud he said, "I understood from Mr Sulu's final remark that he considered thanks were in order. Thank you, Lieutenant."

She smiled. "You're welcome, Mr Spock."

While Uhura returned to the Bridge, Spock gently gathered the Captain in his arms and placed him on his bed. He then tucked the blanket around him and settled back to watch and wait.

The night passed slowly for Doctor McCoy also. He was annoyed with himself for his stupidity in falling for the Vulcan's trick, for becoming emotionally involved in allowing himself to care for James Kirk, and for drowning his sorrows in whisky. He wished he'd had the sense to use Saurian brandy instead. The whisky had been a gift from Mr Scott. He could now see why.

Just then the Sickbay doors opened and the person at the centre of his thoughts entered, looking much the worse for wear.

"Could ye give me something for a hangover, Leonard?" he asked pleasantly.

All the anger in McCoy boiled over.

"You set me up, Scotty. You gave me the bottle of whisky. How dare you come in here about your hangover. Get out! Get out now!"

A bewildered Chief Engineer hastily backed away, wondering if the whisky had been too much for the Doctor. It *was* a man's drink.

Left alone again, McCoy reconsidered his position. As he saw it he had no option but to tender his resignation. He was surprised that the Vulcan had led him to that. The man had never retaliated verbally, and that had served to annoy the Doctor further. He was sure there were emotions hidden under that too-brittle mask of stone. Kirk had told him there was more to Spock than met the eye and had suggested he try and understand the Vulcan. It seemed he'd left it too late. Spock had got his measure first. It amazed him that the Vulcan had employed Scotty to do his dirty work. He had thought of the Scotsman as a budding friend. He swore under his breath, and in a depressed state took out and signed a resignation form.

When he made his way to the Captain's cabin, he had every intention of entering and handing it to Kirk. That would be easiest for all of them. However, when he turned the bend in the corridor he saw the Vulcan emerge from the Captain's cabin and enter his own.

What's Spock been doing in there? Has he been in there all night? If so, what on earth for? No doubt he's been giving Jim his side of the story. Damn. I wanted to explain this to Jim in my own way. Isn't it enough to get rid of me? Do you have to totally humiliate me as well, Spock?

As though he had heard the Doctor's unspoken plea, Spock reappeared, in a fresh uniform. McCoy held his breath as the Vulcan turned towards him, but seconds later, Spock disappeared back into the Captain's cabin. McCoy returned to Sickbay. He'd wait until he could see Jim alone.

Some minutes later Spock entered the Bridge, having left the red pills and a glass of water beside Kirk's bed. He nodded politely to Uhura and took the centre seat from Sulu. The change of shift proceeded smoothly. Only one man failed to appear on time - Captain James T. Kirk. Kyle started to comment on the fact, but was frozen by a cold stare from the Vulcan. He took the hint.

Kirk appeared for duty ten minutes late. He took over from Spock with a formal, "Thank you, Mr Spock", but didn't escape close scrutiny from those alien eyes. Kyle looked across at the Captain with some sympathy. However Spock returned to his own station without comment. Kirk sat down, nursing a pounding headache but trying hard to ignore it. Those tablets someone had left him had better start to work soon.

The shift passed quietly but Kirk was never so glad of the arrival of his relief.

Coffee. That was the answer. With this in mind Kirk made his way to the rec room. Scotty cornered him there, his own steaming cup in hand.

"My apologies, Captain. I seem to have overdone the whisky last night. My head's still a size too large, and Doctor McCoy wasn't in the mood to give me something for it."

"I don't seem to have fared much better myself, Mr Scott. However," and he smiled disarmingly, "it was a worthwhile experience."

The Chief Engineer relaxed immediately and sat down next to the Captain.

"I guess Mr Spock took care of you last night."

"Spock?"

"Aye. I told him you were legless and he promised to call the Doctor for you."

"I'm afraid I don't remember much. I just woke up this morning tucked up neatly in bed, and late for work. Spock did look at me kind of strangely when I took command, but I thought it was because I was late."

Just then Dr McCoy walked in. Anger still blazed on his face as he made his way over to their table.

"Getting your tuppennybit in too, are you, Mr Scott?"

"Pardon?"

"It was you who made Spock call me last night and got him to say the Captain was legless, wasn't it? Don't bother to deny it. He's already implicated you. Well I hope you've had a good laugh. I personally didn't find it funny. If you don't mind, I'd like to see you alone, Captain. What I have to say is for your ears only."

Spock appeared at the Captain's shoulder.

"My apologies, Captain. I believe I should speak to you before you talk to Dr McCoy."

"Now hold on just one minute, Spock. You've had all night to say whatever you're gonna say. It's my turn now so just butt out."

"Captain Kirk to the Bridge. Mr Spock to the Bridge." Uhura's voice came over the intercom.

"Sorry, Bones," said Kirk. "We'll have to take this up later. Duty calls."

Kirk marched out of the rec room, Spock close on his heels. They entered the turbolift together.

"Okay, Spock, what's this all about?"

"An error on my part, Captain. The Doctor believes I acted as I did through malice rather than ignorance and I have not had a chance to speak to him to explain."

"Malice? You?"

"Indeed."

"I know you two don't get on all that well but I can't believe he'd think that badly of you."

"It is my fault, Captain. I called him to your quarters on a medical emergency believing that to be legless meant to have a difficulty with your legs. He was most upset to find that I had used the emergency procedures incorrectly. He did not allow me to explain."

"I see. Well he'll get over it, Spock. I suggest you wait until he cools down and then talk to him."

They continued the journey in silence. Suddenly Kirk burst out laughing.

"You called him on a medical emergency when I was drunk!"

"Correct."

"Spock, that's hilarious."

"Hilarious?"

"I mean everyone will be laughing at you when they find out. It's the funniest thing I've heard in weeks."

"I have no objection, Captain. The Doctor, however, appeared angry rather than amused."

"You wait. Bones himself will see the funny side when he's cooled down. He's probably just annoyed at being called out in the middle of the night. Fancy you thinking legless meant problems with your legs!"

"That did seem most logical ..."

He never finished as the lift doors opened to deposit them on the Bridge.

"My apologies, Captain" said Uhura.

"It seems to be a day for apologies," commented Kirk to no-one in particular. "What's the problem?"

"A false alarm, Captain."

"False alarm?"

Spock's right eyebrow rose a centimetre. Uhura winked at him. His left eyebrow joined the right.

"I hope I didn't interrupt anything ... vital."

Kirk blinked. Then he grinned.

"You're an angel, Uhura. I can see you're right on top of ship's communications."

"Indeed," she said in her best Vulcan imitation. "Only logical, Captain. It is my job."

"Captain?" said Spock.

"Forget it, Spock. Lieutenant Uhura has just planned and actioned a fine rescue mission single handed. My compliments."

With that Kirk left the Bridge, Spock following, as usual.

McCoy, not surprisingly, was unable to catch Jim Kirk alone. Kirk had got wind of a problem and wasn't about to be out-manoeuvred by the ship's doctor.

Instead of cooling down with the passing of time, however, the Doctor became more and more annoyed. Everywhere he went people started to talk amongst themselves and then to laugh out loud. He got redder and redder and more and more wound up inside.

It was the last straw when he appeared on the Bridge and Uhura whispered to Sulu and then the two of them started to laugh.

"What's so funny, Uhura?" he asked, expecting her to make some sort of cover up.

"Haven't you heard, Doctor?" she asked. "I thought you'd be the first to bait Spock about it."

"About what?" asked McCoy suspiciously.

"About the meaning of being legless."

"Why should I ask Spock the meaning of legless when he knows perfectly well what it means?"

"Oh, he thought he knew," laughed Sulu. "The trouble was his was a logical deduction. He thought being legless meant being without legs, or hurting your legs. Everyone's laughing about it. Spock can't show his face without someone laughing. And he makes it worse by raising an eyebrow every time he gets that reaction. I don't think he's understood the joke any more than he understood legless!"

McCoy took a few moments to think this through.

"You mean Spock put out the medical emergency last night because he really believed ..." He stopped mid-sentence. "Wa'll..." he drawled. He considered the matter further. "I don't think it's fair that you should laugh at Spock because of a misinterpretation. I'd be the first to poke fun at him if the occasion warranted it, but Spock is Vulcan. He does pretty damn well with our language - a lot better than any of us would fare with Vulcan. Noooo, I don't think you should laugh at Spock about this. If I'd realised that was why folks were laughing whenever they saw me I'd have stopped them myself."

"Is that a fact?" asked Uhura.

McCoy blushed. Somehow he felt Uhura knew more than she was letting on.

"Let's put it this way, Uhura. Last night is one I'd like to forget. I'm sure both Scotty and the Captain would like to forget it. If Spock understood the situation I think he'd like to forget it too. That makes it pretty unanimous among the command crew wouldn't you say, or don't you agree?"

"Oh I agree entirely," she replied sweetly. "Far too many people jumped to wrong conclusions last night if you ask me. Poor Scotty had his head bitten off over a hangover and I don't think Vulcans are too keen on Human jokes. It can't have been easy for Spock to have people laughing at him all day, can it, Doctor? It's a wonder he hasn't explained the situation away logically, isn't it?"

McCoy met her eyes and then looked away. Uhura knew! She inclined her head fractionally as though confirming this fact. McCoy took a deep breath.

"Thank you, Lieutenant. I see your point. I hope you'll encourage the crew to forget last night."

"Last night, Doctor? I'm sure everyone but Mr Spock and Scotty will have forgotten last night before the day is out. If you see them the whole thing will be unanimous, won't it?"

"You drive a hard bargain," commented the Doctor as he thoughtfully left the Bridge.

He looked up Scotty first. It was easier to talk to the Scotsman. After all they were friends. He told Scotty the whole story from beginning to end. He was heard out in silence, then the Scotsman nodded knowingly.

"Apology accepted, Leonard. Leastways, if ye have some of those wee tablets."

McCoy produced some from his pocket as though by magic.

"What about Spock?" he asked.

"Aye. I reckon you owe the laddie an apology too."

It wasn't that easy. McCoy returned to Sickbay and opened a bottle of brandy. He poured himself an overlarge portion and cupped the amber nectar in both hands, but he didn't sip any. He just remained seated, thinking.

He started as a shadow appeared.

"Forgive me, Doctor. I did not mean to startle you."

McCoy bit back the angry retort that came to his lips. What was Spock doing here, in Sickbay? Was he ill?

"Is something wrong, Spock?" he asked solicitously.

"Yes. Something is wrong, Doctor."

"Are you in pain?"

"Yes. It pains me to know that I am the cause of a ship's doctor turning to an alcoholic beverage to solve his problems. It pains me further to think that doctor is considering leaving this ship because of a misunderstanding. I know you have no wish to discuss last night, Doctor, but nevertheless you will hear me out.

"Last night I called you to the Captain's cabin believing Captain Kirk to be seriously hurt. I misunderstood the meaning of the word legless as used by Mr Scott. I sought you for your medical expertise. While I find you to be highly emotional and while I do not understand your motivations or your actions I should rather trust the Captain to you than to any other physician on this ship. It was not my intention to ridicule you, nor to force you to resign. Vulcans do not believe in 'getting their own back' I believe is the Human expression. I offer my apologies if it appeared otherwise to you."

Spock remained standing, head bowed, waiting for McCoy's response. The Doctor looked at him, more closely than he'd ever looked at him before. Spock radiated tension. His hands were firmly clasped behind his back. He was almost at attention, if it weren't for the bowed head.

He cares. He actually cares!

A lump formed in McCoy's throat. Suddenly he remembered Spock's position as he had entered the Captain's cabin. He'd been caught fair and square showing his feelings for the Captain, but McCoy had been too busy with his own problems to recognise the fact. He

considered the ridicule Spock had suffered all day, and the price the proud Vulcan had paid to come to Sickbay to apologise to him.

I sure enough came to the right conclusion last night but based on the wrong premise. Words can't hurt where there are no feelings, but they sure can where someone's feelings are deeply hidden. I've had plenty of experience - I should be able to recognise the signs in someone else. You're a very clever man, Mr Spock. I'm gonna have to watch you more closely in future. I can't have you fooling your doctor that way.

Carefully he placed his glass, still untouched, back on the table. He stood up and gently placed his index finger under the Vulcan's chin to raise his head.

The Vulcan's head shot up although he remained at attention with hands firmly behind his back.

"I owe you an apology, Mr Spock," stated McCoy very quietly. "It was not my intention to put Human interpretations on your actions. I've been so busy extolling Human virtues that I seem to have forgotten Vulcan ones. You haven't told Jim about my being drunk last night; nor have you told him about my resignation."

It was a statement, not a question.

"In fact, you've been the brunt of a joke that should have been aimed at me, haven't you?"

"Since Vulcans do not recognise humour, Doctor, that is irrelevant."

"Maybe, Spock. You don't recognise thanks either, but I thank you anyway. It took a lot of courage for you to come here tonight. It should have been me that sought you out. I said some pretty nasty things to you last night. I've spent the last few months running away - mostly from myself. I'm through running, Spock."

He picked up the brandy bottle and threw the contents down the sink. Only the glass remained. McCoy picked it up and held it up to Spock in salute.

"To the five year mission, Mr Spock," he declared. "May we learn to understand each other by the end of it!"

"That would be in keeping with the Vulcan concept of IDIC, Doctor, the belief that all things"

Just then James T. Kirk came in.

"Have you got anything for a hangover, Bones?" he asked, before realising that Spock too was in Sickbay. The Vulcan was hardly a regular visitor. Then he remembered their conversation in the turbolift.

"I guess this is a bad moment, huh?" he enquired.

"On the contrary, Jim," responded McCoy. "Spock and I were just reflecting on the lessons of last night."

"Last night?" asked Kirk, but mentally he noted *Bones called him Spock; not Mr Spock. Something's going on here. Something good. I hope I haven't spoiled it for them.*



"Of course, you weren't in a fit state to remember last night, Jim. We'll have to tell you about it someday, won't we Spock? But not for a few years yet."

"Indeed. I shall remind you on an appropriate occasion, Doctor."

Spock backed out of Sickbay, almost hastily. Under his breath McCoy mumbled, "I'll bet he has the memory of an elephant too, blast him!"

"Pardon, Bones?"

"Nothing, Jim. Spock and I were discussing Vulcan and Human philosophy when you came in. My mind just turned to Vulcan anatomy, but I don't think you'd want to hear about that!"

"Not right now, Bones. My head's about to drop off!"

Out in the corridor there was a slight break in the Vulcan's measured tread. How illogical these Humans were. If legless meant being drunk he didn't care to speculate on the meaning of headless!



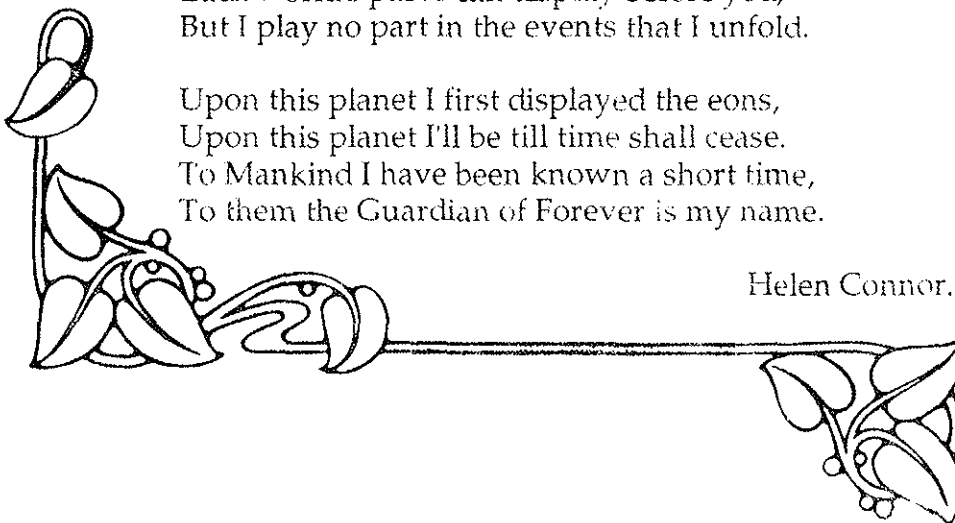
TIME

For a thousand years I've waited for a question,
For longer still I've offered passage through time.
Now I think Mankind has learned a lesson -
Time should be left to time alone.

I can reveal the passing of the ages,
I can show the history of the years.
Each world's past I can display before you,
But I play no part in the events that I unfold.

Upon this planet I first displayed the eons,
Upon this planet I'll be till time shall cease.
To Mankind I have been known a short time,
To them the Guardian of Forever is my name.

Helen Connor.



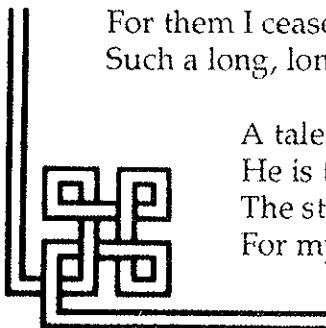
ONCE UPON A VOYAGE

They were almost frozen.
 Winter's fiercest storm
 Raged in fury round the cliffs.
 Succumbing to the biting chill
 They would have perished.
 No sentient being ever walked
 This solitary landscape;
 Loneliness was a horizon, always empty.
 In lonely isolation
 Could the mind see, hear, its own creations?
 No vision of madness!
 He took my hand in his
 And I believed in his existence.
 In the calming of his voice
 Came acceptance of reality.

Those hoped-for words.
 I'd longed to hear him say
 That he had found me beautiful.
 Cradled in his fingertips.
 He drew me near;
 Shadowed pools, his eyes of deepest depth.
 His lips touched mine in tender kiss
 And gentle arms entwined me.
 In passion's sway
 His fingers lingered on my face,
 A link-to-link caress,
 The Vulcan way.

At first the portal could not be found
 He urged his friend
 To abandon the futile search
 And return to shelter,
 For his friend still had the ill upon him.
 Then cruelly a rushing torrent
 Swept us from each other's arms,
 So many things unspoken.
 In an infinity of time
 For us it seemed
 Not a single moment could be spared.
 From the instant they left,
 But a breath away,
 For them I ceased to be
 Such a long, long, long time before.

A tale to tell.
 He is there in every syllable and line.
 The story of how it was -
 For my son.



ALTA JACTA EST

by

Jeremy S.C. Broadribb

"Starship, lock in on this," said Merik. "Three to beam..." Some sixth sense made him dodge the pro-consul's dagger. "Three to beam up."

"Make that four!" yelled Kirk, smashing the submachine gun across Claudius Marcus' hand and dragging Merik into the cell with him. The transporter hum sounded around them as the guards sprayed the cell with bullets. The Enterprise transporter room appeared around them, a very welcome sight. Kirk walked over to the console and called for a Security team.

"Captain Merik is under arrest," he told them. "Escort him to the brig and keep him there until further notice."

"Jim," said Merik, still shaken by their narrow escape, "you must believe I had no choice. It was the only way open."

"This ship will head for Starbase Five, where charges will be formally filed. The Federation authorities will have to hold a hearing to determine whether there are sufficient grounds for criminal proceedings. Starfleet Command will also need to be informed of your actions and they will no doubt wish to send representatives to these proceedings. You'll be granted your full rights as a Federation citizen and permitted the services of an attorney. Better make it a good one. Lock him up, Mr. Dickerson."

Merik departed, flanked by the Security men. Kirk called the bridge.

"Mr. Chekov, lock in course for Starbase Five. Mr. Sulu, take us out of orbit, go to warp six. Lt. Uhura."

"Uhura here, Captain."

"You've been monitoring broadcasts from the surface of the planet. Did you make extensive recordings?"

"Yes, sir. Future studies of the culture there will need our records to work from."

"They'll be needed for something else before that. Have the taped records filed carefully and placed under restricted access, myself and the First Officer only to authorise their retrieval."

"Aye, sir."

"Get me a channel to Starbase Five. I'll be in my quarters." Kirk felt he should change out of his slave costume before resuming his command chair.

Commodore Rehas listened to Kirk's report calmly and without interrupting. His

antennae twitched just once as he listened, but that was the only sign he showed of any emotional reaction. He remained silent for a few seconds after Kirk finished, then spoke evenly.

"You have a recording of the gladiatorial fight in which Harrison was killed?" he asked.

"That and other broadcasts from around the planet, sir. The prosecution will have to sift through it all to determine what is relevant to Merik's case."

"So will the defence, unless we want him to claim we withheld information. You and your landing party will have to prepare your testimonies too. Shame we don't have a member of his crew to testify."

"There was no time to look for any more survivors, although if we can follow up and keep it secret from the planet's inhabitants..."

"Don't even think about it, Captain. You didn't get a hundred metres before someone spotted you there and we're talking about three very capable and experienced officers. We can't risk anyone else going near the surface of that planet. In fact, in my opinion, we should slap a class one prohibition order on it until further notice."

"It's hardly the same problem as Talos Four..."

"You're not supposed to know that, but the Enterprise is a special case. Maybe not, but I think the situation justifies the same restrictions. That'll be my recommendation to Starfleet Command. You can make your own - you were there. The point is that the only witnesses who saw Merik in action on the planet were you and your landing-party. If we want a conviction, it'll depend on you three."

Kirk grimaced. "I see, sir."

"Something wrong?"

"Merik and I were at the Academy together. We were on good terms in the five years he was there. Now, my testimony could send him to a rehabilitation colony."

"Criminal actions earn punishments, not the testimony of others. You can only say what you witnessed. If you tell the truth, it won't be your fault whatever happens to him."

"I'm aware of that, sir. If he hadn't taken that communicator, however..."

"He couldn't have known for sure that he'd have a chance to use it. He gambled and got lucky."

"Perhaps. We'll have all the information ready for the local Federation Counsel's office on our arrival. The Enterprise will have to stay in orbit as long as the enquiry and trial are in progress. I dare say Mr. Scott will think up some engineering maintenance and overhaul to make the stay worth while in his eyes."

"You've been in space for over four months. There's bound to be something that needs work, even if it's just precautionary maintenance. Where's Merik now? In the brig?"

"Yes. I'm taking no chances."

"We'll have to get him a defence attorney and they'll need time to confer..."

"I have someone in mind, sir. I have my Communications Officer trying to track him down. He's a good lawyer, with a good record."

"This case could be one that spoils it. Badly."

"That's why I think he'll take it."

"He must be good. Keep me posted, Captain. Starbase out." The image faded from the viewer and was replaced by Uhura's face.

"Yes, Uhura?"

"I contacted Mr. Cogley's office, Captain. He's on Argelius on vacation."

"On Argelius? He didn't strike me as being interested in that sort of thing..."

"He's in the library complex in Arga City, researching," Uhura replied, smiling. "If we divert there to pick him up, we'll only lose two days at the most."

"See if you can contact him before we have to change course, Lieutenant. I think I can persuade him to take the case."

Merik looked up as Kirk approached his cell. Kirk spoke briefly to the guard, who deactivated the force-field long enough for the Captain to join the prisoner. Merik pushed the library- reader screen aside.

"I've been catching up on the news," he explained. "Seven years can change a lot of things."

Kirk nodded. "And you changed in that time, too."

"For the worse. For six years I was a puppet, Jim, afraid to risk my own skin by disobeying orders."

"First Citizen. A high office in a society like that. How long did you think you'd survive there?"

"As long as I had to, Jim. There are two ways to survive in the Empire - fight better than anyone else or don't fight at all. I was never much of a fighter and Claudius Marcus wanted someone he could control in the job. I knew there was a chance of another ship finding us one day. I hoped they'd find the wreckage of the Beagle spread all around space and give us up for dead. Obviously the debris was still close enough together for you to tell that the crew weren't aboard when she broke up."

"And you gave in to the Empire. Sacrificed your crew to keep yourself alive..."

"We all survived there as best we could. Harrison stayed alive for nearly seven years before his luck ran out. Now he *was* a fighter - in every sense of the word - but he didn't have the brains to be anything but a gladiator in that society. That or a criminal - and both ended up in the arena. There are some of my crew still alive on that planet. Seven or eight lead the lives

of perfectly respectable, but unremarkable, Roman citizens. Two or three of them are living where the Empire has no jurisdiction, and making a nuisance of themselves at intervals. The others, as far as I know, are dead. One of *them* was employed as an assassin, and very nearly got Claudius Marcus. Pity, he was doing so well at it."

"But without Claudius Marcus, you'd be finished. You could never have taken his place, you wouldn't have had the strength. Stealing that communicator must have been the first time you'd gone against him - and he tried to kill you for it."

"That's the Roman way, Jim. I think I got away lightly by leaving with you. The Federation won't kill me, that I'm sure of."

"You wouldn't have gone with us if I hadn't grabbed you. Too frightened of what you'd have to face - what you *have* to face. Anything in the news that gives you any hope? They haven't rescinded the Prime Directive, if that's what you were looking for."

"No. They haven't. But they may have softer penalties these days. I see the Justice Secretary changed twice in the first three years since I left. Is Naussen still there or...?"

"He was re-elected last year and moved up to Deputy General-Secretary along with Coordinator Baxter of Earth. The new Justice Secretary is Opa Hryssk; she's an Andorian and a hardliner, who has not softened any penalties as it wasn't necessary."

Merik shrugged his shoulders. "There's not much hope for me, is there?"

"You'll need a defending counsel, that's obvious. Have you any ideas?"

"My own solicitor's on Earth, but he's just a contracts man. I suppose some rookie or someone just ready for retirement will get the job by appointment."

"If you leave it to the Advocate's Office, perhaps. It doesn't have to be."

"You have someone in mind?"

"Samuel Cogley. If you agree, we can pick him up en route."

"Why not? It's up to him if he wants to handle a hopeless case."

Kirk smiled. "He's already been contacted. Now you've agreed, we can divert to Argelius to get him." He signalled to the guard to let him out. From the other side of the force-field he added, "If you want a news item that might provide you with a ray of hope, try the records for stardate 2947.3, Starbase Eleven. You'll find a couple of familiar names from your Academy days mentioned."

"Approaching Argelius, Captain," Sulu reported.

"We are cleared to orbit, sir," Uhura added. "Mr. Cogley is standing by ready to beam aboard."

"Standard orbit, Mr. Sulu. Transporter room, lock on to Mr. Cogley's co-ordinates and prepare to bring him aboard."

"Captain," Spock warned, "since you, I and Dr. McCoy are principal witnesses for the prosecution, it would not be in order for any of us to have any more contact with Mr. Cogley than is absolutely necessary."

"Quite right, Spock. Uhura, have Lieutenant-Commander Giotto meet Mr. Cogley in the transporter room, show him his quarters and introduce him to his client."

"Aye, sir. Arga City ground station reports passenger ready to beam up."

"Transporter room, energise."

"Here are your quarters, Mr. Cogley," said Giotto, opening the door. Cogley nodded his thanks. Giotto went on, "If you want to leave your things here, I'll take you to see the accused."

"If it's all the same to you, Mr. Giotto," Cogley replied, "I'd like to review the main facts of the case before I see my client."

"As you wish, sir. This will provide you with most of the details. Our records can provide you with any information on the case if you request it." Giotto handed over a computer tape, which Cogley eyed with distaste, but accepted with thanks. He carried his case into his room, switched off the antigrav units and watched it settle to the floor. It opened to reveal a small amount of clothing and several layers of books.

Samuel T. Cogley, Attorney-at-Law, looked wistfully at his books, then stepped over to the computer console.

"Time to break a good habit;" he muttered. "Computer, I want you to play this through. Give me a hard copy when I ask for it, and I'll want a complete transcript of anything verbal, witness statements and such. Understood?"

"Working..."

"That's just as well."

"Complete transcript of all relevant statements and conversations will require eleven hours of printer output time."

"Do you have something else to do? Don't answer that, just do as I said. Quick precis first, then give me the details. Go."

"Working. Stardate 1010.2, survey vessel S.S. Beagle on mission to explore mineral deposits in quadrant G26. While passing through unexplored system number eight-nine-two, vessel suffered damage from meteor impact resulting in shutdown of main drive systems and deaths of two crewmembers. Captain Robert M. Merik, ship's Chief Engineer Rachael Daniels and geologist Ileu Jolescu transported to surface of fourth planet to investigate iridium ore readings..."

"Captain Merik, I presume. You're the only prisoner in this cell," Cogley smiled and held out his hand. Merik shook it, but couldn't manage a smile.

"Mr. Cogley, I'm pleased to meet you. You come highly recommended, although I feel I need a miracle, not an attorney."

"You need both. I've reviewed the main facts of the case as they stand. I'll be frank - they do not look good. In fact, they look awful for you. You're accused of violating the Federation's highest law, one that has practically become a holy institution. The prosecution has witnesses who saw you in action and there is recorded visual evidence of the results of your activities. At worst you appear to be an amoral, self-seeking traitor with a dictator complex. At best you look like a weak, cowardly fool. Neither is likely to appeal very much to the trial board or the jury. All in all, a more hopeless case I may never hope to see."

"I know, sir. If you wish to pull out, I can't blame you. Your record speaks for itself. I'd hate to spoil it for you with a defeat..."

"Defeat? Young man, we are going to win! If we work hard enough, this attorney will get your miracle for you."

The planet that was home to Starbase Five grew larger on the viewscreen as the Enterprise manoeuvred through its solar system. As the bridge crew began to make out the shapes of the continents, Uhura signalled the base for permission to assume orbit.

"Captain, Starbase signals permission granted," she informed Kirk.

"Standard orbit, Mr. Sulu."

"Additional from Starbase, sir. Commodore Rehas requests that you beam down immediately we have established orbit."

"Acknowledge, Lieutenant. Tell them we're on our way. Spock, come with me. Dr. McCoy, report to the transporter room. Mr. Sulu, you have the conn."

It was raining heavily around the Starfleet offices. Fortunately, Kirk, Spock and McCoy beamed down indoors, where they were met by a young female ensign.

"Captain Kirk," she said, looking up at him. "I'm Ensign Hava, Commodore Rehas's administrative assistant. He asked that you and your officers meet with him immediately on your arrival. He has a representative from the Starfleet Legal Division with him, and the Federation Prosecutor for this sector. Follow me, please."

They followed her into the main section of the base offices. A number of people of various races were hard at work at their stations, correlating data from ship reports, monitoring repair stations or maintaining contact with ships in the area. The Intelligence offices were, typically, about one hundred metres below the surface and not easily accessible. Hava nodded to several people on their way through, mostly Tellarites like herself, but with a number of Andorians, Humans and a large proportion of Centaurans in the engineering section. Finally they reached the centre of the building and Hava ushered them in to Rehas's office. The Andorian looked up as they entered the room.

"Jim, Mr. Spock, Doctor, glad you found your way here. I don't think you know Prosecutor Idra Herrin." He indicated a tall, dark Centauran woman in her early forties.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Prosecutor," Kirk greeted her.

"A pleasure to meet you, Captain," she replied. "My colleague's description of you doesn't do you justice."

"Hello, Jim," said Areel Shaw. "Far too long, no see."

"Areel," Kirk said, smiling at her. "This is turning into quite a reunion."

"Yes, but why bring Sam Cogley into it?" she asked. "He's just clever enough to save Merik's neck."

"I should have thought you'd welcome a chance to get your own back - and we've a pretty solid case this time."

"I had a seemingly-solid case last time, remember?"

"Yes, but this time I'm on *your* side. Anyway, why underestimate yourself? Starfleet obviously recognised your talents." He nodded at the additional half-ring on her sleeve.

"If memory serves," Spock added, "Prosecutor Herrin never lost a case throughout her term as Centauran Chief Prosecutor and has yet to do so in her present post."

"Quite correct, Mr. Spock," replied Herrin. "However, I've only been in this job seven months and I've never had to face Samuel T. Cogley. I feel as though I should be putting my brain through a strict exercise routine to prepare for the ordeal."

Kirk smiled at the thought and Spock nodded his agreement.

"Mr. Cogley is a most cunning attorney," said the Vulcan. "His strength lies in rhetoric and a strong talent for the theatrical. The most predictable feature of his defence case is that he will do something unexpected and dramatic. Have you viewed the evidence?"

"The bulk of it," Herrin answered. "Pretty gruesome stuff, some of it. You were lucky to get out alive."

"It was partly thanks to Merik that we did," McCoy admitted.

"Do you think he'll go for board or jury?" asked Herrin.

"Jury," said Areel Shaw. "Sam likes an audience. It's Merik's decision really, but his profile suggests Sam'll make it for him."

"I think you're right," said Kirk. "It would take Merik a week to decide."

"It would serve him right to get a jury of Vulcans," snorted McCoy.

"They would at least judge the case on the facts and not be swayed by pleas to their emotions," replied Spock. "Unfortunately, however, it is unlikely that such a jury could be assembled by any selectively random process from the population of this planet. Despite this disadvantage, it is my belief that the evidence amassed is such as to produce a verdict favourable to the prosecution."

"We should win," agreed Areel Shaw.

"I believe I just said that," replied Spock, frowning in puzzlement.

Herrin smiled then informed them, "We'll need to interview all three of you before the trial, and your Communications Officer. Lt. Uhura will have to testify regarding the source of the recorded material."

"We'll be ready aboard the Enterprise when you need us," Kirk answered. "You'll want Merik transferred to your custody, I assume?" he asked Rehas.

"Whenever you're ready, Captain."

"I'm more than ready, sir. With your permission..." Kirk drew his communicator and signalled the starship. "Kirk to Enterprise."

"Scott here, sir."

"Mr. Scott, have a Security team escort Captain Merik to the transporter and beam down with him. There they are to hand him over to the Starbase Security squad, who will meet them at the beam-down point."

"Aye, sir. Mr. Cogley has already requested permission to accompany him down."

"That's no surprise. I don't think we can stop him..." Herrin and Areel Shaw shook their heads. "He can go with him. The Starbase will assign him some quarters and an office. I suppose all his books and files will have to go too."

"Separately, sir. I don't think the transporter could handle all that mass at once."

"You may have a point there. How about the repairs and maintenance - have you found the base personnel something to do?"

"They're arguing over some of the requisitions, sir, but the parts are coming aboard gradually."

"Maybe they've figured out which parts are for the still."

"What still, sir? I have a legitimate need for every item requested..."

"Okay, okay, just signal us when you're ready to beam them down. Kirk out." He turned to address Rehas. "When will the trial take place, Commodore?"

"We have to call people in for jury service first. It's not as if we have to every day. The press office is working on a reasonably unbiased release on the case, though it won't be easy to stop it all getting blown out of proportion..."

"A violation of the Prime Directive blown out of proportion?" demanded McCoy. "This I have to see."

"I dare say you will," Rehas replied, smiling. "The fewer details we give them, the more they'll invent. Then we have to allow time for Counsels to prepare their cases. We're using all the computerised, total-access facilities available to us, so we should be ready in about three days. On that basis, Sam Cogley will be ready in about two weeks."

Areel Shaw shook her head. "Sam's probably ready now and is waiting for us to catch

up. We have to *prove* Merik guilty and Sam will have an answer for just about anything we produce. If he doesn't have an answer for it, we'll know it's not relevant."

"Unless he's bluffing," added Herrin as Kirk's communicator bleeped.

"Kirk here."

"Scott reporting, Captain. They're in the transporter room now."

Kirk nodded to Rehas, who signalled his Security Chief to arrange the transfer. After a few moments, he received a signal and nodded to the Captain.

"Send them down, Scotty," Kirk ordered. "Starbase Security will take charge of Captain Merik as soon as they arrive."

The four Security men waited by the transporter platform as the beam split into six parts, which solidified into Merik, Cogley and their escort from the Enterprise. Lieutenant-Commander Giotto stepped off the platform and addressed his opposite number.

"Transferring Captain Merik to your custody, Lt. Kralowcus."

"Acknowledged, Commander Giotto," she replied. She scrawled a signature on the padd he held and her men took charge of Merik.

"Don't you want to check the goods are all there?" asked Cogley.

"Were they ever?" countered Giotto. "He's all yours, Lieutenant." He watched as Merik was led away to the Security block, Cogley bringing up the rear. "Transporter room, we're ready to beam back up. Then you'd better have all those books sent down here."

"Merik shouldn't have a chance," Kirk opined. "Maybe I found him the only one he could have."

"And who was it who once told *me* not to talk shop?" asked Areel Shaw across the table. "I didn't realise this was a working dinner."

Kirk grinned ruefully. "I didn't intend it to be."

"Neither did I." She leaned forward slightly. "Tell me what you've been up to since we last saw each other, Jim."

"Don't you read the bulletins?" he asked in a tone of surprise.

"That's the official version. Then there are the news reports which either play up the wrong aspects or exaggerate everything. I want to hear what Jim Kirk saw and did from Jim Kirk."

"Just as long as I can eat as I go," he insisted, picking up his knife. "I don't want my steak to get cold."

Areel gestured with a forkful of swede. "Go right ahead. How is it?"

"Nice and chewy. We didn't stay away from Starbase Eleven for long as it turned out. Chris Pike had a bad accident - "

"That's putting it mildly."

"And Spock had a great idea how to help him get over it. He didn't let me in on it until the last possible moment, being Spock, but it seemed to work. What became of Commodore Stone, by the way?"

"He was transferred to Starbase Twenty-two," replied Areel. Kirk looked surprised and she shrugged. "They said he was just being rotated to give a newly-promoted commodore a less difficult first assignment."

"But Twenty-two's out in the backwaters, and it's on a class K planet. Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned that he tried to hush my case up. Well, Spock got away with it. Then we discovered the greatest shore leave planet you ever saw..."

"I was on a party there once. They do cater for your every need, don't they? You can meet anyone you want to, too." She smiled reminiscently.

"Anyone I know?"

"You know him slightly, but not as well as I do. Where else have you been?"

"I'm beginning to think I've seen it all - super-children, inter-dimensional travel, computer control, computer warfare, symbiotic plant life, new intelligences equal to and greater than ours. Time travel..." He frowned unhappily.

"Something wrong?" she asked, concerned.

"Nothing I couldn't cope with in time. How about you? What have you been doing?"

"No more courts martial, I'm glad to say. I was on the team that finalised the details on the Organian treaty; that got me the promotion. I also learned a few phrases of Klingonese."

"Any of them repeatable?"

"Most of them barely pronounceable. Your name came up a few times. I won't repeat the comments, though, not while I'm eating." She paused to down a forkful of something green. "I was on the Starfleet legal team for the enquiry into the loss of the Anubis. There were all sorts of theories surrounding that - sabotage, sneak attack by the Klingons or Romulans or both, mutiny resulting in destruction, insanity in the Captain..."

"And after all that it just hit an asteroid owing to a sensor malfunction. Ten survivors were found in an escape pod one week into the investigation." He shook his head ruefully. "Scotty insisted on overhauling our sensor systems as soon as the news broke."

"How was it?" asked Areel.

"Hectic. He had the floor up outside my quarters..."

"The food, Jim."

"Oh. Just right, thank you."

"Are you ready for dessert?" she asked, smiling.

Kirk looked doubtful. "I... Dr. McCoy wouldn't approve of all the calories..."

Areel shook her head and grinned. "I was just suggesting we help each other burn a few up..."

The lights had been dimmed in the hallway by the time McCoy accompanied Idra Herrin to her room in the accommodation section. She smiled down at him at the door.

"It was kind of you to escort me to my quarters, Doctor," she said. "I'm sorry Mr. Spock had to leave quite so promptly."

"Spock probably assumed you knew the way to your own door and didn't need a guide. Thank you for a most pleasant evening, not only on my own behalf but Spock's too."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it. I helped choose the music for the concert and I thought Starship personnel wouldn't have many opportunities to hear live music."

McCoy nodded in agreement. "No recording, however perfect, will ever make it obsolete. Just as no machine will ever really replace man. Spock might disagree, but I saw his expression during the Canon."

Herrin laughed lightly. "It doesn't surprise me that he liked it. It's a very precise exercise in mathematics."

"Of course. My thanks again and a very good night." He kissed her hand and she entered her room. As the door closed behind her, McCoy sighed deeply and left for his own quarters.

Kirk beamed back to the Enterprise to find Scotty haranguing some unfortunate official in the Starbase Supply Office.

"The requisition calls for two packs of twenty-five osmium-cored, size three control block isolation units. One pack I have. The other is spare parts for phasers - Starbase phasers! Now when do we get the pack I ordered?"

"The records show you've already had them, Mr. Scott," a voice replied nervously. "But if you send down the incorrect items, we'll exchange them."

"I'll bring them down myself - and show your despatch people the items I do want. And I'll have another requisition with me. Enterprise out." He hit the cut-off switch angrily and made a note to get a replacement for it.

"Problems, Scotty?" asked Kirk.

"Nothing I can't handle, Captain. She'll be as good as new when we've finished."

"I asked for service and maintenance, not a full refit."

"You want us to keep busy, sir, don't you?" Scott replied defensively.

Kirk smiled resignedly and headed for the bridge. His junior officers snapped to alertness as they realised who had arrived.

"Captain!" said Sulu in surprise. "We didn't expect you back so quickly. Is anything wrong, sir?"

Kirk shook his head. "I just got a little homesick, Mr. Sulu. Is everything all right?"

"No problems here, sir. They haven't got to the helm console yet, but I'll make sure I'm here when they do."

"Good, but take some leave time. You've all earned it."

"Captain," Palmer announced from the communications station. "Incoming message from Commodore Rehas."

"Put it on the screen, Lieutenant."

The view of the planet was replaced by the Commodore's pale blue features. Rehas was seated behind his desk, slowly turning a computer tape over in his hands. He looked worried.

"Yes, Commodore, what can I do for you?" Kirk asked. The worried expression started to spread to Kirk's face as the Commodore's gaze met his.

"You can beam back down here and get ready for a long stay, Captain." The tone was matter-of-fact rather than commanding. Kirk looked surprised.

"What happened?"

Rehas smiled wryly. "Sam Cogley called in thirty minutes ago. He says he's ready when we are."

"He's... Why am I surprised? Areel as good as said this would happen. Is the prosecution ready yet?"

"Herrin's practically ready to pull her hair out," Rehas replied. "Areel Shaw didn't seem surprised - she asked what took him so long. That means you and those members of your crew called as witnesses will have to beam down and stay on the base until the trial is finished with you. See you down here in twenty minutes, Jim. Starbase out." The planet reappeared on the viewscreen as Rehas's image faded. Kirk gripped the back of his chair, then smacked it with his right hand.

"Just when I thought I had time to get some work done! Transporter room stand by; I'm beaming down again. Mr. Sulu - you have the con. Just keep the orbit steady."

Rehas glanced up as Idra Herrin entered his office. The Prosecutor looked less confident than at their last meeting. The Commodore finished with the document he was drafting, signed it and sent it to the communications room.

"Where's Lt. Shaw?" he asked.

"On her way, I expect. We only work together. Any more news?"

"I've approved the list of potential jurors and this signal came twenty minutes ago." He held the reader up for her to see.

"Senior Court Judge Shimon Gabriel," she read. "Estimated arrival in two days. Do you know him?"

Rehas shrugged. "Only what I read and hear in news reports. How about you?"

She shook her head. "I've heard of him, of course. I've seen Counsels who thought they knew all the tricks shudder at his name. That goes for defence and prosecution alike. Merik is going to get a trial based on facts, that's for certain. That should help us."

The doors opened and Areel Shaw breezed in. Rehas turned the reader so that she could study the text on it and she nodded in acknowledgement.

"I heard he was in this sector. I saw him in court once. The defending counsel had woven a beautifully convoluted story, twisting all the evidence around to put his client in a good light. I found *myself* believing it - and Gabriel looked fast asleep in his chair.

"He wasn't. When the defence had finished his statement, Gabriel looked at him and repeated the whole story back to him, without any twisting around or clever phraseology. That counsel was trying to hide under his desk by the time he'd finished and I think he had a breakdown soon afterwards. I think he might cramp Sam Cogley's style a little."

Rehas' antennae twitched as he thought. "You've sorted out all the charges and made Cogley aware of what they are?"

"Yes," replied Areel, "all six of them. He may even plead guilty to some of the lesser ones. Sam's never done that before, so he may try it just to rattle us."

"That wouldn't rattle me," replied Herrin. "Arrrho Katulin's lawyer tried it two years ago. He wanted all the major offences 'taken into consideration' - apparently they still do that on some of the worlds he was trying to degrade. Fortunately the Federation caught him on Deneb Five and you know what that means. If he pleads guilty to any of the major charges, *that* would rattle me. It would also mean we've wasted a lot of hard work."

The warble of the communicator woke Kirk and he reached out to answer it. He thought better of it as he remembered where he was. He nudged Areel, who groaned protestingly.

"You'd better answer it, Areel. These are your quarters."

"Urrrdmmthingawannasleep..." she replied, rising to one elbow with a great effort. "Shaw here," she answered.

"Areel, why is the visual off?" asked Herrin's voice.

"If I'd wanted you to know I'd have left it on. Mainly because I'm not dressed yet and that bothers some people. What did you wake me for?"

Herrin let out a long sigh. "Gabriel arrived fifteen minutes ago. The trial's been set for five days' time. Time for dress rehearsals."

"Now? It's... Well, the sun's up, I suppose. Give me half an hour and I'll meet you at the office."

"See you there. Sorry to wake you, Captain."

The young Ensign's voiced boomed impressively through the base courtroom. "All rise. Sector Court of Federation Law is now in session, Senior Court Judge Shimon Gabriel presiding. All those with business to transact before this court draw near and give your attention."

"All right, you can sit down now," Gabriel informed them in a deep, accentless voice. The judge was a small, middle-aged man with features that jutted from his face, his cheekbones almost wedge-shaped and a fringe of black hair framing his otherwise hairless scalp. His eyelids drooped almost sleepily, but the hard, brown eyes were very much awake. He settled into his chair and nodded to the clerk of the court. "The defendant will rise. Read the charges please."

Merik and Cogley stood up as the charges were read.

"Robert Mattheus Merik you are charged with the following offences:

"That on stardate 1010.2, being the Captain of the survey vessel S.S. Beagle, you did engage in contact with intelligent life-forms on the surface of Planet Four, system eight-nine-two, and did reveal the nature of your origins and culture to individuals on that planet, in contravention of the Prime Directive of Federation space exploration.

"That you did wilfully order all surviving members of your crew to transport to the surface of the planet and abandon a repairable vessel to destruction.

"That you did encourage members of your crew to infiltrate the culture of the planet and cause further interference with that culture.

"That you did assume a senior office in the planet's culture, displacing native-born individuals and significantly affecting the progress of its civilisation by the actions you took in that office.

"That you did officiate at gladiatorial contests on the planet, in some of which members of your crew were killed. As their commanding officer you are charged with causing those deaths by design or by negligence.

"That you did attempt to persuade members of the crew of the Starship Enterprise to interfere with the planet's development by transporting the crew of that vessel to the surface.

"To the first charge, violation of the Prime Directive, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty," replied Merik, looking at the judge.

"To the second charge, of negligence, resulting in loss of vessel, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty," replied Merik firmly.

"To the third charge, of encouraging cultural interference, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty," Merik replied, less certain of himself this time.

"To the fourth charge, of direct interference in the planet's culture, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty." Kirk thought he saw the ghost of a smile on Merik's lips as he answered the charge.

"To the fifth charge, of contributing to the deaths of members of your crew, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty!" Merik seemed to put a special effort into that one.

"To the sixth charge, of attempting to encourage others to violate Starfleet and Federation laws, what is the plea?"

"Not guilty." Almost a mumble. The fact that Kirk, Spock and McCoy all looked straight at Merik as he answered may have affected his enunciation.

"Pleas so entered," the clerk went on. "I shall call the names of the jurors and their home towns as they come to take their places. If either counsel objects to a juror they should state their reasons clearly. Walter Allan Davis of Basetown..."

A grey-haired man in his thirties, a civilian office worker by the look of him, stepped forward. There were no objections and he took his seat.

"Gerda Walenska of Cochrane City..."

The woman could have been any age from twenty to fifty, working in the industrial centre for however long her age implied. She too was allowed to sit down.

"Ivan Davidovitch Dordonyov of Settlement Fourteen..."

A fat, red-faced farmer who looked like a stereotype. No objections.

"Chung Xi Han of Basetown. Leonard Henry Harrison of Douglas..."

"The name Harrison features in some of the evidence, Your Honour," Sam Cogley spoke up suddenly.

"It's a common enough name," replied Gabriel. "Have you proof of any blood relationship?"

"No, Your Honour, but the occurrence of the name might cause unnecessary prejudice in the juror's subconscious..."

"So might any number of things, Mr. Cogley. Overruled."

"Katherine Wesson of Bodesville. Venda Irugha of Cochrane City. Ensign Vito Ekeris of Basetown..."

"Sit down, Mr. Cogley," said Gabriel as the lawyer started to rise. "Starfleet officers cannot be excluded for that reason alone."

"Savida Ming of Kayess..."

"Your Honour." Idra Herrin stood up. "Ms. Ming is a well-known campaigner against the Prime Directive outside of Starfleet."

"And appeared in a much-publicised libel case on the subject," added Gabriel. "Sustained. Ms. Ming, you are excused from jury service on this occasion, unless Mr. Cogley has any reason you should remain."

"No reason at all, Your Honour," Cogley answered. The clerk read out the names of the last four jurors without interruption and they took their seats. Gabriel turned to face Idra Herrin.

"Prosecutor Herrin, you may now state the case for the prosecution."

Herrin rose and nodded to him in acknowledgement. "Members of the jury," she began. "Robert M. Merik is guilty of crimes that we of the Federation find abhorrent and horrifying in their consequences." She came around her desk and walked slowly around the courtroom.

"We shall prove that Merik, tempted by the easy life offered by a more primitive society and the opportunities to advance himself therein, abused his command authority in ordering the abandonment of his vessel by its crew, that he abused the authority he bought for himself on that planet. You will be shown the type of regime he became a part of and under which several of his crew met their deaths. We shall produce witnesses to testify how Merik, not content with his own crew's violations of the Prime Directive, attempted to incite the crew of a Starship to follow his example." The Prosecutor made her way along the benches occupied by the jury, stopping now and again to look each of them, in turn, in the eyes as she spoke.

"Merik's whole background is one of frustrated ambition and inability to meet the standards required for the position he wanted to occupy - command of a Starship. His transfer into the merchant service after being dropped from Starfleet Academy was a last resort to get into space, to achieve the position of command for which he was not fit. Faced with the situation on eight-nine-two/four, he saw the chance to realise his dreams of power. Once in possession of that power he proceeded to abuse it, proving - as if proof were needed - that he was unfit to wield such power. This was not merely power corrupting a man - this was power being made corrupt by an already corrupt man. Merik cannot even try the tired, old excuse of only obeying orders..." Herrin turned suddenly and pointed straight at Merik. "*He gave those orders!* The responsibility is his. The fault is his. The guilt is his. He is guilty of violating the Prime Directive, of betraying his crewmates to their deaths, of trying to coerce others to do as he did." She turned to face the jury again. "After all the evidence has been presented, this court can produce only one verdict - that of guilty on all counts." She returned behind her desk and resumed her seat.

Gabriel's expression hadn't altered throughout Herrin's statement, save for the occasional blink. He turned his gaze upon Cogley, who was opening his file to study his notes. "You may now state the case for the defence, Mr. Cogley," Gabriel intoned flatly.

Cogley nodded and rose to his feet. "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Your Honour; my client, Captain Robert Mattheus Merik..."

"Objection!" cried Herrin. "Merik neither rates nor deserves the title of Captain since his

master's licence expired two years ago and he has not renewed it."

"Even ex-captains, whatever one may think of them, are entitled to be called by the title," Cogley protested.

"When they have enough years of loyal service to back it up," Herrin retorted. She pointed at Merik. "You can hardly say that about *him*!"

"I believe that's one of the things we're here to discuss, isn't it?" Cogley enquired politely, inclining his head and smiling.

Gabriel declined to smile in return. "It's a minor point at this stage," he said. "Objection overruled. Continue, Mr. Cogley."

Herrin's expression as she sat down suggested she'd find a better argument next time. Kirk leaned over and murmured to McCoy, "We'll have to call him First Citizen Merik by the time they've finished."

"Captain Merik is an innocent man," Cogley went on. "Far from being the self-centred monster conjured up by my learned friend's statement, my client is, at worst, a victim of circumstances beyond his control. At his best, he is a man who responded well to those unfortunate circumstances and took the steps necessary to maximise the survival chances for his crewmates." Cogley had wandered over to the jury and now began to pace slowly towards the bench, his gaze directed at the floor, except when he glanced up at each juror - managing to look each of them in the eye as he did so.

"Faced with a crippled ship and no means of returning home, he took the decision to abandon ship and beam down to the surface of the nearest class M planet. With a thriving civilisation already on the planet, the crew of the Beagle were hardly in a position to colonise it or live rough until they could be rescued. Captain Merik's decision that they settle into the prevailing culture and live within it was the most practical solution at hand. It ensured survival for those who could adapt and prevented contamination of the local culture by their own." Cogley reached the far end of the jury and began to retrace his steps, looking at the jurors this time, hands clasped before him.

"Having entrusted his knowledge to a local dignitary, Captain Merik worked with him to ensure his crewmates did not interfere with the planet's civilisation. That Captain Merik fell increasingly under the thumb of the pro-consul was inevitable, if unfortunate, as such was the regime in force. Captain Merik cannot be held responsible for the actions of the civilisation of which he became a part - its patterns and culture were well established long before the Beagle's entry into system eight-nine-two." The attorney leaned on one arm against the jury-box facing both judge and jury as he spoke.

"Upon the arrival of the Starship Enterprise, Captain Merik became alarmed that reports from that ship would bring more Federation vessels, or even hostile vessels, into the system. He also feared that the Enterprise would attempt to take him and his crewmates away from the homes they had made on eight-nine-two/four, an action which would disrupt the native culture as their arrival had not done. In his concern for his new home civilisation, Captain Merik tried to persuade the commander of the Enterprise not to return with any reports on the planet. That he tried to persuade the crew to join him and his crew demonstrates nothing more sinister than his great concern for the integrity of the culture he had come to regard as his own." Cogley strode back to his desk, addressing the court at large as he went.

"This man is not a criminal. He is not a monster, a meddler or a coward. He is simply a

man who did the best he could under near-impossible circumstances. We do not have the right to punish this man for his actions, for we could have done no better." He nodded to Gabriel and sat down.

Gabriel paused for a few seconds, almost as if expecting someone else to speak first, then breathed out heavily. "That concludes the opening statements," he declared. "The prosecution will now present its case and evidence to support same. The defence will do likewise afterwards. Prosecutor Herrin, call your first witness, please."

Herrin consulted her notes quickly, then stood up. "The prosecution calls Lieutenant Uhura, Communications Officer of the Starship Enterprise."

Uhura left her seat and walked over to the witness stand. She sat down and placed her palm on the scanner. The computer scan was promptly activated and the machine duly relayed her identity and service records.

"Working. Uhura, Starfleet serial number S976-1134TMC. Service rank: Lieutenant. Current assignment: U.S.S. Enterprise, position: Chief Communications Officer. Awards: Class A-7 communication systems rating, class A-6 computer and data retrieval rating. Starfleet Cross, second class, Altair Six Palm Leaf, many commendations. Author of three articles on communication system technical operations."

Uhura faced the judge and declared: "I affirm on my honour as a Starfleet officer that I shall tell the truth and withhold nothing."

Herrin stepped forward and smiled at Uhura pleasantly. "Lt. Uhura, you were at the communications station aboard the Enterprise when the ship approached planet eight-nine-two/four, weren't you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What did your instruments register in the way of communications traffic?"

"Frequency and amplitude modulation transmissions. Principally about ten audio channels and two audio-visual channels."

"Nothing on Starfleet or Federation frequencies?"

"Not from that area, no," Uhura replied, frowning.

Herrin looked towards the judge, then appeared to stare out of a window. "In your experience, Lt. Uhura, when coming across a damaged, disabled or even wrecked ship, wouldn't you expect to receive *something* on Federation frequencies?" She turned to face Uhura again.

"Only a distress beacon, operated automatically in the event of a disaster from the recorder-marker."

"Even if the ship were destroyed?"

"The recorder-marker is jettisoned from a well-protected launcher."

"But the Beagle left no such signal around?"

"No, ma'am."

"Can the launching of such a recorder-marker be prevented by those aboard the vessel?"

"If there is a good reason for them not wanting to be found - if it would result in the spread of a plague or danger to rescuers or interference in an unstable culture, the launch can be locked- off."

"On whose authority?"

"The Captain's." Uhura looked towards Merik as she answered.

"Without the crew necessarily knowing about it?" Herrin asked, looking Uhura in the eyes.

"Quite possibly; he holds the code sequence."

Cogley rose at this. "Your Honour, this is all pure conjecture on the part of witness and counsel. I move it be struck from the record."

"Your Honour," Herrin replied, "no distress signal was received by the Enterprise. Since this is unusual, we should explore the reasons behind it."

"Probable reasons, Prosecutor," Gabriel corrected her. "However, since it would have been the defendant's decision to prevent the launch, it is relevant to at least one of the charges. Motion denied. Continue, Prosecutor."

"I think we've established that there was no distress signal being sent by the Beagle and that Merik had the power to prevent its being transmitted. Is a recorder-marker relatively easy to destroy?"

"I only know of it happening once," Uhura replied. "And that took a technology much more advanced than ours. They're small and armoured against meteor damage."

"So that they have a high chance of survival?"

"We once found one that survived over two centuries," Uhura replied, smiling.

Herrin turned to face the jury. "We will now see visual evidence of the communications that *were* received by the Enterprise in orbit around the planet. Some of the items contained in these extracts may be disturbing, but this evidence is relevant to the charges against Merik. Activate the main viewer, please."

The screen came alive as the recording was replayed to the court. The arrest of the dissident slaves caused a few raised eyebrows, but the full detail shown in the gladiatorial fights produced expressions of horror and revulsion on the faces of many of the jurors and most of the public. The death of William B. Harrison brought a cry from the gallery as the picture faded, to be replaced by a commercial for the Jupiter 8. This week's special offer was a free slave and tickets for the family to the arena.

There followed a news item that showed First Citizen Merikus opening the new wing of the Maximanus City Gladiator School. Merik stood behind a rostrum, smiling a tight, uncomfortable smile and recited a short speech before cutting a ribbon with a short sword. The official party looked slightly embarrassed at the fact that it took him four slashes to cut

through it. One of the gladiators lunged at Merik as he left the platform, but was gunned down by armed guards before he could get close enough to injure the First Citizen, who left looking shaken and a few shades paler. The announcer revealed the would-be assassin as a barbarian named Alexei Volenkhov.

A programme on 'The Value of The Games' showed a recording of a bout between one Ionus Lucius Battista, a hulking giant of a man who looked like he uprooted redwood trees to warm up, and the barbarian John Zhoy Hueng, an oriental Earthman about a metre and a half in height. As Battista advanced menacingly, Hueng retreated to a safe distance, weighed up the short sword in his hand and threw it suddenly across the arena where it struck the giant neatly under the ribs. Battista's helmet came off as he hit the ground, revealing an expression of astonishment on the dead man's face. The guards at once grabbed Hueng and the Master of the Games disqualified him, declaring the late Battista the winner. It transpired that this was an example of the sort of thing that could not be tolerated if standards were to be maintained. Hueng's next match, against three hungry tigers, hadn't gone so well, the commentator went on to explain.

The picture faded from the screen and Herrin drew attention to some of the names mentioned in the broadcasts. "William B. Harrison, Flight Officer of the S.S. Beagle. Alexei Volenkhov, helmsman of the S.S. Beagle. John Zhoy Hueng, Transporter Chief of the S.S. Beagle. These men, and others, are dead because Robert Merik ordered them to beam down and settle on that planet.

"Lt. Uhura, these are recordings of genuine broadcasts from planet eight-nine-two/four, are they not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"They have not been edited to conceal any unwanted details?"

Uhura smiled wryly. "Hardly. That is, no ma'am."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. Engage the viewer again, please."

This time the scenes on the screen were not of a violent nature. The first item showed a leading official leaving hospital shaking hands with his doctors, Claudius Tullius Garo, Marcus Valenta and Philippa Vandembloomia. This last seemed to be receiving the lengthiest thanks.

There was a news item about how an accountant named Sturtus Kennedi had had the use of his left arm surgically impaired as punishment for a serious tax fraud. The tone of the announcement suggested he had got off lightly.

A good citizenship award was presented to local trader Irtius Volluns, a tall, spare man not untypical of eight-nine-two/four, but more typical of Alpha Centauri A three. Volluns posed for photographs with his sturdy, pretty young wife and three children.

A commercial for Neptune bath salts showed the managing director congratulating the development team responsible for the new, improved, bubbling bath salts. Quintus Ponti, Gallius Valens, Sara Ramiriesa and Geraldus Morganus smiled for the cameras as the voice-over extolled the virtues of the product.

"Doctor Philippa Van Den Bloom, xenobiologist, Stuart Kennedy, ship's purser, Irti Volluns, botanist, Sarah Ramirez and Gerald Morgan, organic chemists." Herrin listed. "All these were members of the crew of the S.S. Beagle. Now they are on planet eight-nine-two/

four with all their knowledge at the disposal of its inhabitants." She turned to Uhura again. "Lieutenant, these extracts are genuine and not edited in any way?"

"That's correct, ma'am."

"Thank you. Did you record any broadcasts regarding the empire's policy towards any groups in particular?"

"There were several about the 'son worshippers', as they were called. None of them was especially sympathetic."

"May it please the court to listen to this extract from a radio broadcast from the planet, recorded by the U.S.S. Enterprise," Herrin requested.

"...demonstrates that they have no aim but the destruction of the empire. They ask for death to be visited upon our people and poison a river to start a plague in Bonnum. They are dangerous idealists who deal in dreams and care nothing for those who will not share those dreams. Their ideas have been outlawed and their apprehension and detention ordered by First Citizen Merikus in line with the Pro-Consul's new laws. Your government is working daily to protect its cities and their citizens from the threat posed by these dissidents..."

"The dissidents in question," Herrin informed the court, "were the religious group called the son-worshippers." She turned to face the jury again. "Far from being the terrorist gang they were suggested to be by the broadcast, these people had a deeply-held philosophy of total brotherhood and peace. Most importantly, however, you will note that the broadcast specifically mentions Merik and his part in the persecution of this group. Lieutenant, that broadcast was unedited and unaltered, am I correct?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Uhura.

"Thank you, Lieutenant. I have no further questions for this witness, Your Honour." Herrin smiled at Uhura briefly and returned to her seat.

Gabriel leaned forward in his chair and looked towards the defence counsel.

"Mr. Cogley, do you wish to question the witness?" he asked.

Cogley stood up and looked at Uhura for a few seconds, then walked around his desk. "Yes, Your Honour, I have a few questions for this witness." He walked over to the witness stand. "Lieutenant, did you intercept many broadcasts from the planet?"

"We were in orbit over it for almost four days and there were several stations broadcasting. We recorded quite a lot."

"Mostly, I assume, from the city where your Captain and his landing-party were being held?"

"Yes, we stayed in orbit over the city as that would give us the best chance to get them out."

Cogley inclined his head slightly. "So the broadcasts we heard were from local or zonal stations, rather than planetary ones?"

"Yes, I suppose so. There was a kind of Empire News twice a day."

"Did *it* mention Captain Merik?" he challenged.

"Once, yes," she replied.

"On what occasion?"

"It was shortly after the landing-party had beamed back aboard the Enterprise."

Cogley leaned closer to her. "Would it have been to announce his death, by any chance?"

"Yes, it was, although we knew he wasn't dead. The Empire claimed Flavius Maximus assassinated him before storming into the arena."

"But that was the only mention he got. Was it the major item in the news bulletin?"

"One of them," replied Uhura.

"The first item?"

"No, it was about fifth, I think."

Cogley turned towards the judge. "Your Honour, the item of news was the sixth in that bulletin after the tax reforms by the Emperor, the Senate's proposed amendments to the Slaves Act, a multiple pile-up in the second city, an ecstatic reception for the star of the top soap opera when he appeared on stage and the announcement of redundancies by the Charon tobacco company. All of which demonstrates just how little importance my client had on that planet. Consequently, he can have had no effect on its culture or development. If anything, *it* affected *him*, and the evidence presented by my learned friend demonstrates this better than I could myself. No further questions."

Gabriel raised his eyebrows momentarily. "Do you wish to re-examine the witness, Prosecutor?" Herrin shook her head. "Lieutenant, you may step down."

Uhura stood up and returned to her place in the public gallery. She looked confused by the questioning, unsure which side had been most helped by her answers. Herrin rose to her feet again.

"The prosecution calls Doctor Leonard McCoy, Chief Medical Officer of the U.S.S. Enterprise."

McCoy rose from his seat in the public area and walked over to the witness stand. He placed his hand on the scanner as he sat down and the computer identified him.

"McCoy, Leonard H., Starfleet serial number S31-2248MDT. Service rank: Lieutenant-Commander. Current assignment : U.S.S. Enterprise. Position : Chief Medical Officer..." followed by a brief precis of McCoy's record and awards.

Facing Gabriel, McCoy declared solemnly : "I affirm on my honour as a Starfleet officer that I shall tell the truth and withhold nothing."

"Dr. McCoy," said Herrin, approaching him. "Under what circumstances did you meet the defendant?"

"I was part of a landing-party that beamed down to the planet to follow up what little we

knew about the Beagle's fate. We didn't get far before we encountered..."

"Thank you, Doctor, but the question was about the circumstances under which you met Robert Merik. Where were you?"

McCoy looked annoyed at being interrupted. "In a cell," he replied tersely.

"And what was he doing?"

"Watching us try to escape from it."

"Did he try to help you at all?"

"Hardly. He was accompanied by several armed guards - and the pro-consul. We were then taken to the pro-consul's rooms."

"How would you describe their attitude towards you?"

"Outwardly friendly, but the threats were made quite clearly," McCoy replied.

"The threat of harm to yourselves?" Herrin asked, leaning forward.

"If we didn't co-operate, yes."

"What about Merik? What was his attitude towards all this?"

"Objection, Your Honour," Sam Cogley called without looking up.

"Sustained," replied Gabriel. "The witness is being invited to speculate about the defendant's state of mind."

"Doctor," Herrin asked him. "Did Merik in any way detach himself from the threats made against you?"

"No, not really. If anything he was trying to persuade us to give in easily. The pro-consul was doing the threatening. He meant it, too."

Herrin appeared suddenly interested in this last sentence. "He meant it? What happened to you after your talk with Merik and the pro-consul?"

"Spock and I were sent to fight in their arena, in front of the cameras!" McCoy replied indignantly. "Against two gladiators."

"And you somehow survived. Was Merik involved in your survival?"

"The hell he was!" snarled McCoy. "When asked to decide what to do with us, all he could do was shuffle his feet and ask the pro-consul to make the decision for him. We were sent back to our cell and stayed there until Captain Kirk got us out, grabbed Merik from the safety of his guards and we were able to beam up to the Enterprise."

"A narrow escape," Herrin acknowledged, nodding. "Now, you are an acknowledged expert on space psychology and the effects of space flight on human behaviour. Is that correct?"

"I know something about it, yes."

"Now, Doctor. Could the defendant's mind have been affected by the crises of his command?"

"The only one I know of is the damage to his ship that left it orbiting eight-nine-two/four. I would hardly think that would send him out of his mind."

"Why not?"

"Any space vessel runs the risk of such damage at some time. Someone who cracks up when it happens wouldn't rise to any command. The deaths of members of his crew might have affected him, but I couldn't say to what extent."

"But was he sane and aware of his actions when you saw him?"

"Objection, Your Honour," Cogley interrupted.

"Sustained," Gabriel acknowledged. "The witness can state his opinion as an opinion, not as solid fact."

"Very well," Herrin went on. "In your opinion, was the defendant responsible for his actions?"

"He knew what he was doing, when he did anything."

"Thank you, Dr. McCoy. No further questions." She returned to her seat and Gabriel looked towards Cogley.

"Your witness, Mr. Cogley."

Cogley walked over to the witness stand. "Doctor, how was it that you and the others were able to beam back to the Enterprise?"

"We used a communicator to signal them."

"Who produced that communicator and signalled the ship to beam you up?" Cogley asked, looking towards the ceiling.

"It was Merik."

"No further questions, Your Honour," announced Cogley, resuming his place.

"Prosecutor Herrin, do you wish to re-examine the witness?" asked Gabriel.

"No further questions, Your Honour," replied Herrin, looking as if she wished she could think of some good ones.

"Doctor McCoy, you may step down." McCoy left the witness stand and returned to his seat next to Kirk. "That will be all for today," Gabriel announced. "Court will resume at oh-nine-hundred hours local time tomorrow."

"All rise!" yelled the Ensign as Gabriel stood and left the courtroom. Of the two

Counsels, Herrin looked the more worried.

McCoy looked at his friends uncertainly as he approached the table. He cleared his throat before speaking.

"Er... Mind if I join you?" he asked.

"Of course, Bones. Why not?" replied Kirk, looking puzzled. "Sit down and eat."

The Doctor sat down and sighed with relief. The base dining hall was starting to fill up with personnel coming off duty. Kirk and Spock had already laid claim to a table by the time he'd collected his dinner.

"Well after the performance I gave in there..." McCoy gestured over his shoulder with his fork and risked hurling a small potato through the window, "I didn't know if anyone'd be talking to me."

"Don't worry about it - you'll only give yourself indigestion and I should know. You told the truth and that's what matters."

"Yeah, but I shouldn't have left out the bit about the communicator. Cogley must have thought it was his birthday when he was able to ask about it."

Spock nodded thoughtfully and swallowed whatever form of cellulose he had been chewing.

"Perhaps, Doctor. However, there is little that one can do about it now. I should consider myself to have done very well if my testimony were to relate just one incident in Merik's favour." Spock looked grave. "In fact, we shall find out soon enough what my testimony contributes to each case."

"You'll just corroborate what Bones has just told them," said Kirk. "You were together the whole time and saw all the same things. No doubt that precise, logical mind of yours has every detail noted down and available at any time."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "If by that you mean do I remember the events clearly, then of course I do. My account will concur with Dr. McCoy's."

"Only don't forget to mention the communicator," muttered McCoy wryly.

"I affirm on my honour as a Starfleet officer that I shall tell the truth and withhold nothing," Spock declared firmly from the witness stand. Herrin stood and walked over to Spock. She smiled at him, although he failed to reciprocate.

"Commander Spock, would you outline the circumstances that led the U.S.S. Enterprise to planet eight-nine-two/four?" she asked, leaning against the witness stand.

"We were on a routine mission, when instruments indicated a mass of debris. Scanners showed it to be fabricated material, hull sections, engine parts, circuitry and personal belongings. However, no trace of humanoid tissue was present among the debris..."

"There were no bodies in the wreckage?"

"I believe I just said that. Further analysis of the wreckage indicated it to be from a Federation survey vessel. The S.S. Beagle was reported missing in the area some six years previously and was the only logical source of the debris.

"The absence of any corpses suggested that the crew had left the ship prior to its destruction. Therefore we retraced the drift pattern of the debris to Planet Four of system eight-nine-two. A landing party was assembled to search for survivors, taking care to avoid unnecessary contact with indigenous life forms."

"You weren't very successful at that, though," Herrin reminded him.

Spock appeared thoughtful. "Perhaps not," he said. "Or so it would appear at first glance. However, for us to find Merik quickly it was perhaps necessary for us to find some form of native guide. In the event, he found us."

Herrin nodded in acknowledgement. "Please tell the court how you came to meet Robert Merik," she asked.

"We were detected by a group of the cult known as son-worshippers and taken to their hiding-place. After the Captain had won their confidence, one of their number acted as our escort to the nearby city. The local police detected and captured us. It was when we attempted to escape from our cell that Merik appeared, accompanied by Pro-Consul Claudius Marcus and ten armed guards."

"What was his reaction upon seeing you?"

"He had been informed of our arrival. He seemed merely satisfied that our escape attempt had not succeeded. We were escorted to the pro-consul's quarters, where the Captain questioned Merik about the fate of his vessel and crew."

Herrin seemed uninterested, for the time being anyway, in the fate of Merik's vessel and crew and asked Spock about Merik's defence of the society in which he had settled.

"He described it as an ordered world based on time-honoured strengths and virtues. He pointed out that no war had occurred there for over four centuries - an interesting comparison with Earth's history for the four centuries prior to its twentieth century."

"You approve?" Herrin sounded quite shocked at the idea.

"I understand it," Spock amended. "I do not approve. There may have been no war, but violent death had been far from eliminated. Indeed, when one considers how many cities on the planet have their own arenas, and the kind of giant mock-battles that feature at festivals, then in the course of two thousand years of Empire, a higher percentage of the planet's population may well have died by violence than in all the wars on Earth in that time. The forms of death have merely acquired a more professional touch. Furthermore, the maintenance of a slave culture retards the development of industrialisation and automation - why have machines when there are slaves to do the work?"

Herrin nodded understandingly. "When your Captain refused to order more of your crew to beam down, you and the Doctor were taken to the arena to fight. Did Merik appear concerned for your safety?"

"He showed no outward sign of it. Fortunately, I was able to overcome the two gladiators and rescue Dr. McCoy. However, the guards promptly seized us and declared the result void. Merik seemed incapable of making any decision and the pro-consul sent us back to our cell. There we remained until Captain Kirk effected an escape, whereupon Merik produced a communicator and called the Enterprise..." Spock may have put more emphasis on the last eight words than he intended. Certainly it caused a ripple of laughter among the public.

"Silence in court!" Gabriel ordered, forcing down a smile.

Spock went on. "Captain Kirk pulled him into the cell with us and we beamed up together."

"Did Merik express any regret for his actions?" Herrin asked.

"He asked for our understanding," Spock replied.

Herrin raised her eyebrows and held her arms out, palms outward towards the jury in a gesture of astonishment. She shook her head resignedly and smiled at Spock, who met her gaze blankly.

"No further questions, thank you, Commander Spock."

"Your witness, Mr. Cogley," Gabriel responded.

Cogley rose from his chair, but did not come around the desk.

"Commander, is industrialisation necessarily a good thing?" he asked.

"It is the basis for our own development, including our medical improvements. It also leads indirectly to improved social conditions, once properly controlled."

"You will admit, however, that much social misery resulted from the early industrialisation on Earth, will you not?"

"Social attitudes lagged some way behind progress in other areas, yes."

"So the retardation of such industrialisation was not necessarily bad for the people of planet eight-nine-two/four, am I correct?"

"Perhaps, but slavery as an alternative is hardly defensible, evolved or otherwise."

Cogley decided to concede the point. "You claim as many, or more people have died as a result of organised violent sports on eight-nine-two/four as died in all the wars on Earth in the same time period. Can you support this statement with any exact figures?"

"I have no precise figures with which to confirm or deny it."

"Then your statement to that effect was simply a hypothetical suggestion to indicate certain circumstances, is that it?"

"Quite correct," Spock replied, nodding.

"And therefore was speculation on your part?"

"In the strictest sense of the word, yes."

"...and thus inadmissible evidence. Your Honour, I move that it be struck from the record."

Gabriel looked surprised at the motion and appeared indecisive for the first time in the proceedings.

"It was presented as a hypothesis, Mr. Cogley," he replied. "The essence of it was that the numbers killed might have been the same. Nevertheless, they may have been less, or even more. The record should be amended to make that point quite clear and the jury will please bear it in mind. Will that suffice, Mr. Cogley?"

"I think it gives a more balanced account, Your Honour. Commander Spock also failed to take into account the cultural destruction that results from warfare. I have no further questions, in any case." He sat down.

"Prosecutor, do you wish to re-examine?"

"No, Your Honour. I do feel that counsel for the defence has occupied too much of the court's time on a minor philosophical point already," Herrin replied, looking sidelong at Cogley.

"In that case, why waste more of it arguing the point, Prosecutor?" Gabriel demanded. "You may step down, Commander Spock." Spock left the stand and returned to his seat next to Kirk.

Herrin faced the jury and walked across the courtroom towards them as she spoke.

"The court has heard two accounts of Merik's conduct on the planet and the role he assumed in its political life. We have also heard testimony on the state of the planet's culture and the effects of the Beagle's arrival on that culture. What may not be appreciated, least of all by Merik himself, is the suffering caused to the relatives of those who died as a result of his actions. The prosecution calls Mrs. Sonya Duchinski."

A woman emerged from the public gallery and walked rather self-consciously to the witness stand. She appeared to be about thirty-five years old, of medium height and build, but with the faintest signs of one who has been carefully counting every calorie. Her hair was sprayed dark on the left and blonde on the right, this being the current fashion, and her clothes had clearly been chosen for their memorability. The bailiff handed her the card and she carefully read out the words on it.

"I hereby and solemnly affirm," she intoned, "that the evidence I shall give will be truthful and that I shall withhold nothing." She sat down, still holding the card, until the bailiff managed to take it back.

Herrin addressed the witness. "Mrs. Duchinski, was your husband a member of the Beagle's crew?"

"That's right," Mrs. Duchinski replied.

"And what was his job on the ship?"

"Oh, he did a lot of things. Worked in communications sometimes, helped out in

geology a bit. His main job was in repairs and maintenance, though."

"I believe his assignment was specifically that of technician, third grade," Herrin supplied. "Is that correct?"

"Yes."

Herrin paused, in case the witness felt like amplifying this statement, then asked: "When did you last see your husband, Tadeusz Duchinski?"

"Eight years ago, when he left to rejoin the Beagle. I never imagined that would be the last I saw of him..." She began to sniff mournfully.

Herrin nodded sympathetically and looked towards the jury. She then looked at the judge, saw that he was looking impatient and continued with her questioning.

"When did you hear that the ship was reported missing?"

"Two years later, after it was three months overdue at base station L-7. I hoped he'd still be alive out there, somewhere, but..."

"Of course, and when you heard of Merik's capture and imminent trial, you came forward to offer testimony," said Herrin approvingly.

"Yes. I wanted everyone to know what he'd done to my life and those of all the families of the crew of the Beagle. Thanks to him, I have to rely on just my own income until Starfleet sorts out the pension entitlement."

"Have you any children, Mrs. Duchinski?" Herrin asked.

"No. We would have had one day, but for *him*," she added, pointing at Merik.

"Objection!" Cogley exclaimed. "The absence of little Duchinskis cannot surely be due solely to the actions of Captain Merik."

"Sustained," replied Gabriel. "The witness should rephrase that statement."

"Mrs. Duchinski," Herrin said heavily, "you mean presumably that Merik's actions as Captain of the Beagle have meant that you will never have Tadeusz Duchinski's children. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"No further questions." Herrin resumed her seat.

"Mr. Cogley, do you wish to cross-examine this witness?" Gabriel asked, his expression suggesting he hoped not.

"Mrs. Duchinski," Cogley asked, "has your husband's death left you in debt or other difficulty?"

"No, the insurance'll cover most of it and I've got my own job. But that doesn't bring him back, does it?"

"No, I suppose it doesn't," Cogley replied. "No further questions."

"Do you wish to re-examine, Prosecutor?" Gabriel asked. Herrin shook her head. "You may leave the stand, Mrs. Duchinski."

Mrs. Duchinski left the court, remembering to sniffle part of the way. Gabriel unconsciously drummed his fingers on the bench as she went. Merik was smiling and looking at the floor. When Cogley looked in his direction, Merik leaned towards him and murmured something which made Cogley smile too.

Herrin did not notice the exchange, although Areel Shaw did and frowned in puzzlement, but proceeded to call her next witness.

"The prosecution calls Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise."

Kirk took the oath, once the computer had run through his identification and honours, and sat in the witness chair. Herrin approached, smiling in anticipation of the testimony of her principal witness.

"Captain Kirk," she said, striding across the courtroom, "you were in command of the landing-party that went in search of survivors from the S.S. Beagle, weren't you?"

"That's correct," Kirk replied.

"We've already heard of your encounter with the son-orshippers. You were captured by local police while one of them was guiding you to the city. Do you think they knew you were there?"

Kirk frowned. "Obviously they knew we were there, or they wouldn't have fired on us and arrested us..."

"I mean did they stumble on your group, or were they looking for you specifically?"

Kirk looked puzzled. "I think they stumbled on us. They were surprised and delighted to find they'd captured some 'barbarians'."

Herrin nodded. "I see. You then attempted to escape from your cell, but Merik and his guards were already waiting for you."

"Yes," Kirk replied, nodding. "Three with swords against ten with machine-guns is pretty poor odds."

Herrin smiled briefly. "What was Merik's reaction on seeing you?"

"I'd told one of the guards I wanted to see Merikus - that I was perhaps a friend - so Merik knew I was there. He seemed friendly enough, if a little apprehensive. He made it clear that the pro-consul knew all about his background, if not ours. He said there was a lot to explain. I agreed and he told me not to judge him before I knew the facts. His position in that society was a pretty damning fact from where I stood."

Herrin nodded. "How did he explain that position to you?" she asked.

"He told us about his ship's damage and the landing-party he took down to search for repair materials. He said merely that he met the pro-consul, who persuaded him not to carry

word of their world's existence elsewhere. Apparently, they believed it would result in 'contamination' of their culture. He cited their four centuries of peace and the resulting order and stability as justification of that fear. He admitted making the decision for the Beagle's crew to stay there."

Herrin leaned closer to Kirk. "Did he say if he *had* to make it an order?"

"I asked had they voluntarily 'come ashore'. He didn't answer the question and I was left to draw my own conclusions. He later told me that *I* was going to order my men 'ashore', just as he did, which indicated I'd drawn the right conclusions. The pro-consul then produced one of our communicators and handed it to me, telling me to order my crew down, unless I wanted Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy put slowly to death. I contacted the Enterprise, with every intention of having four of us beamed up. Claudius Marcus had thought of that one - his guards came in and kept us covered. I had to satisfy myself with giving the codeword 'condition green', so that Mr. Scott would know our condition."

"Please explain what is meant by 'condition green', Captain," Gabriel requested.

"It means that the signaller is in a hazardous situation, but that the ship cannot intervene directly. The pro-consul immediately had Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy sent into the arena against two gladiators. During the fight, the pro-consul repeatedly suggested that he would stop the fight if I ordered my men down from the ship."

"And what did Merik do while all this was going on?" Herrin asked, frowning.

"Watched it all rather dejectedly," replied Kirk glancing briefly at the defendant. "He said I would understand why he gave in to the Romans."

"And did you?"

It was Kirk's turn to raise his eyebrows. "Understand why it would persuade him to bring the rest of his crew down for the same treatment? No, I did not understand that. I still don't. He seemed discomfited by the gladiator contest and said most of his men went the same way. Fortunately, Mr. Spock knocked his opponent unconscious and was able to rescue the Doctor. It transpired this was against the rules and Claudius Marcus asked Merik for his decision on them."

"Which was?"

"Nothing. He wouldn't make a decision. The pro-consul ordered them back to their cell and had me escorted to his quarters. After I had been entertained and rested, the pro-consul appeared and explained he was giving me my last hours as a man. He also revealed a communicator was missing and had Merik search me for it, after which he dismissed him rather contemptuously. I was then taken away for execution, which was interrupted by the gladiator Flavius Maximus. In the confusion from the fight, and the timely blackout of the city's power sources by the Enterprise, I was able to escape and free the others. The pro-consul and his guards arrived, closely followed by Merik. In the ensuing fight, Merik produced the communicator and called the ship. I pulled him into the cell with us and we beamed up, after which I had Merik placed under arrest and made a full report to this starbase."

"Was Merik not prepared to beam aboard with you?" Herrin demanded.

"No. His words were: 'Three to beam up.' I amended it to four. Obviously, he decided his prospects were better there than with us, even if that meant death. I had a brief talk with

him in the ship's brig, during which time I recommended he engage Mr. Cogley's services. I felt I owed Merik something for having that communicator handy when he did."

"Now, you knew the defendant prior to the events on eight-nine-two/four, didn't you?" Herrin asked, walking back to her desk, hands on hips. She turned to face Kirk as she finished the question.

"That's right, we were at Starfleet Academy together."

"Did you know him well?"

"We were both aiming for command training, so we took most of the same courses. We were on pretty good terms and had friends in common, so we tended to find ourselves as part of the same 'set'. He had a private life of his own that I didn't intrude into."

Herrin nodded. "Was he a success at the Academy?"

"Academically, he managed pretty well - he got good marks on navigation, systems handling and linguistics. He fell down when it came to the character tests. The psychosimulator test in the fifth year brought his hopes of commanding a Starship, or similar class of vessel, to an end."

"He must have been bitterly disappointed," Herrin said, almost to herself.

"I imagine so; you'd have to ask him that," Kirk replied, causing Gabriel to smile - Cogley had been rising to object to the speculation that Kirk had declined to make. "He transferred into the merchant service and we all wished him well. His Academy training wouldn't be wasted there, and he should have been able to cope with the job."

"Did you see Merik in the intervening time?"

"No. I heard from him when I left the Academy - a message of congratulations - and that was the last communication between us until that jailhouse corridor on eight-nine-two/four."

"Thank you, Captain," said Herrin. "That will be all. No further questions."

"Mr. Cogley, do you wish to cross-examine the witness?" asked Gabriel.

"I have a few questions, Your Honour," replied Cogley, rising and coming around his desk. "Captain Kirk, delighted to meet you again."

"I'm pleased to see you looking so well, sir," replied Kirk, bowing his head courteously.

"Oh, I'm very well, thank you. Now, Captain Kirk, you beamed down to the planet in full uniform with standard equipment, is that correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"I see. Did anyone see you beam down?"

"No-one on the planet, anyway."

"But you were intending to enter the city, were you not?"

"Not necessarily," Kirk answered. "We had no idea what had become of the Beagle's crew and were simply looking for clues. Our contact with the intelligent life of the planet was unintentional. They took us for Roman soldiers or spies at first. I managed to convince them that we were from a ship from another province."

Cogley nodded comprehendingly. "When you were guided towards the city, did you stay in uniform and keep your equipment?"

"We changed into clothing provided by the son-worshippers, but kept our phasers and communicators."

"Did the police confiscate them?"

"They did."

"And you only recovered one communicator, and that courtesy of Captain Merik, didn't you?" Cogley asked, leaning back against his desk.

"Yes, sir."

"So just what effect do you imagine it will have on that planet's cultural development now they have three phasers and two communicators to examine?"

"The transtater circuits in those devices are very compact," Kirk replied. "I saw no evidence of microcircuitry on the planet, let alone anything comparable to the technology necessary to understand the transtater. They may be able to operate them until the power packs run out, but that's all. Besides, I was under the impression that the pro-consul was keeping them well hidden. He seemed to like his world as it was."

Cogley looked impatient and righteously concerned. "With the communicators, they might lure other ships in, and who knows how much damage they could do with the phasers. Don't you agree?"

Kirk shook his head. "No, sir, I do not. Not only has Starfleet put a class one prohibition order on visits to eight-nine-two/four - plus the pro-consul's well-established reluctance to have anyone report his planet's existence - but the power blackout by the Enterprise tapped into any energy source it could find. The communicator we used in our escape had barely enough power for our transmission and its acknowledgement. And a communicator is economical with its power pack compared to a phaser. They might get a few stunning shots or one fatal blast out of each of them at most. And if you're still worried," he continued, smiling, "I had our Chief Engineer search the planet for traces of the power packs and use the ship's beams to drain them further. I'd have beamed them up, but someone might have been studying them."

"I see. You can't deny that Captain Merik saved your lives, though, can you?" Cogley demanded.

"Your presence here, Mr. Cogley, is proof that I acknowledge his actions. I have to give evidence here and tell the truth. I didn't have to recommend a defence counsel."

"I understand. No further questions, Your Honour."

"Prosecutor, have you any further questions?" Gabriel asked.

"No, Your Honour."

"You may leave the witness chair, Captain Kirk." Kirk stood up and returned to his seat between Spock and McCoy.

"Your Honour," Herrin announced, "members of the jury, that concludes the case for the prosecution."

"That being the case," Gabriel replied, "I shall now call a recess until tomorrow morning at nine hours, local time, when the defence will present its case."

"All rise!" bellowed the young bailiff as Gabriel rose and left the room. The courtroom gradually emptied once the defendant had been escorted back to his cell.

Areel Shaw paced up and down in front of Herrin's desk. The prosecutor twirled a pen between her fingers as she studied the readout on the computer screen.

"We're winning, so far, as far as I can tell," Herrin said. "I don't know what you're worrying about."

"Sam's up to something, I can feel it," Areel replied. "And I think we made a mistake putting that Duchinski woman in the witness chair."

"It was a good chance to win sympathy from the jury," Herrin protested.

"They noticed, believe me. So did Gabriel. You could have found a less stupid, less self-conscious Beagle-widow."

"She was the only one to come forward, and at short notice," Herrin explained.

"If the rest are like her, we should be grateful," Areel retorted. "I wonder what Sam's witnesses are going to be like."

"Character witnesses?" suggested Herrin.

"That should be a challenge, even for Sam Cogley. I suppose he'll put Merik on the stand, although he must be debating whether that's a good idea."

"Maybe he flipped a coin on it. His biggest worry is what I'll ask Merik and what I'll get him to say," Herrin smiled broadly. "You know, this could be quite enjoyable."

Areel slumped into a chair. "I hope so," she said uncertainly. "I don't suppose Sam will try to play on the jury's sympathy for Merik. He's not stupid."

"Thanks. That's what I tried with the Duchinski woman," exclaimed Herrin, sitting up and glaring at her junior.

"Well, it didn't work, did it?" retorted Areel. "Anything good on the screen?"

"No, nothing new. The only other case of interest seems to be a fraud scandal in one of the media networks. Most of the press attention seems to be focussed - rather blurredly - on us and our case."

"To be followed, probably, by another scandal in the media networks," Areel predicted. "It's a shame the jury aren't allowed to read some of the reports from the news services - we'd have a conviction in no time flat."

"Until a rival network started a pro-Merik lobby," Herrin countered.

"The Interrogator was practically hinting at cannibalism yesterday. '*Merik Butchered My Husband!!!*'"

"'*Prosecution Witness Ate My Baby!*'. Well, actually it's about Captain Kirk ruining someone's career some years ago..."

"Don't remind me. That was the most embarrassing day of my career, finding out I was trying to prosecute someone for causing a death that hadn't actually happened. Maybe we shouldn't read that stuff ourselves either," she sighed. "It's bad for the blood- pressure. And despite Sam Cogley being bad for my digestion, I'm going to get some dinner before a certain visiting Starship's officers eat it all. Coming?"

The force-field buzzed in a manner designed principally to remind you that it was there. Sam Cogley gave it a look of mild distaste before asking the guard to let him in. The field was switched off long enough for the attorney to enter the cell and then resumed its buzzing.

Merik stood up as his defending counsel came in. It was the first time Cogley had seen him actively eager about anything and his own curiosity grew as a result.

"Well, here I am," Cogley stated unnecessarily. "What was it you had to tell me?"

"Sit down, please, Mr. Cogley," Merik replied courteously. "This could take a while, and we've both had a long day..."

"And I wish you'd get to the point so I can go and eat," Cogley sat on one of the regulation uncomfortable seats provided.

"You'll eat much more happily, I assure you..."

Gabriel entered the courtroom without any great enthusiasm and took his seat. The rest of the court followed suit and the judge's gaze lighted on Sam Cogley.

"Mr. Cogley, would you present the case for the defence, please. You may call your first witness."

Cogley stood up and addressed the court. "The defence calls Dr. Patrick Wilberforce."

A middle-aged, balding man rose from his seat in the public and strode over to the witness chair.

"Who's this guy?" McCoy murmured to Kirk. Kirk shook his head and looked just as puzzled as his Chief Medical Officer.

Wilberforce sat down and placed his right palm on the scanner. The records computer

hummed briefly as it scanned his record-tape then announced:

"Identify Wilberforce, Patrick Harrison Brady. Born, Baltimore, Panamerica, Earth, stardate 0117.1. Graduate in Cultural History, Kennedy University, Master's Degree in Archaic Religions, Doctorate in Ancient Theological Rites And Practices. Currently Associate Lecturer in Cultural History, Proxmire College, Deneb Five."

"I solemnly swear, by almighty God,..." Wilberforce declared loudly.

"Good lord, he's one of *them*!" Areel Shaw murmured to Herrin, who looked stunned by the witness's delivery.

"...that the evidence I shall give shall be the *truth*, the *whole* truth and nothing *but* the truth! So help me God!"

"What do we do now? Applaud?" Kirk asked McCoy.

Cogley didn't seem at all disconcerted by his witness's form of oath, but came around his desk and addressed him casually.

"Dr. Wilberforce, you are an expert on ancient religions, and the Christian religion in particular, is that correct?"

"I know all the proper ceremonies and responses, sir, yes," replied Wilberforce.

"You have, I believe, been studying the report on the culture on planet eight-nine-two/four. Is that correct?"

"It is."

Cogley nodded in acknowledgement. "Now, you'll have noticed the material gathered on the so-called 'son-worshippers' and the comments made by researchers on the Enterprise. Do you agree with their findings?"

"Not entirely, sir."

"Please elaborate, Dr. Wilberforce."

"The report suggests the 'son-worshippers' resemble early Christian believers. However, I saw nothing to suggest a truly Christian faith as it is understood on Earth. There is no mention of transubstantiation, no reference to the Holy Mother or even of a resurrection. All that remains is a vague philosophical and ethical doctrine of peace and brotherhood."

"And that is not Christianity?" Cogley enquired.

"Some might call it such. Frankly, it could apply just as well to, say, the Mithraic cult, which also flourished in the Roman Empire."

"Your Honour," Herrin interrupted, "I fail to see where this evidence applies to any of the charges against Merik."

Gabriel looked up from reading the charges displayed on his desk-screen and eyeballed the defence counsel.

"Mr. Cogley, kindly inform the court precisely how this witness's testimony relates to this case," he requested, his tone suggesting that he also failed to see its relevance.

"Your Honour, I feel it is as well to clear up any misconceptions, in the minds of the jurors and the court, regarding the society on planet eight-nine-two/four. Were they to feel that the 'son-worshippers' were that planet's equivalent of the early Christian faith, they might be misled into misplaced feelings of enmity towards my client. It might also be claimed that knowledge of Christianity and its history could have been used by my client to help the Roman culture against the 'son-worshippers'."

Gabriel pulled a face as he considered this and waved down Idra Herrin even as she rose from her seat.

"You are taking precautions against some rather intangible associations, Mr. Cogley," he commented.

"It was the prosecution who used a broadcast concerning the 'son-worshippers' as evidence against my client, Your Honour. May I proceed?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Continue, Mr. Cogley."

Cogley smiled and half-bowed his head in gratitude. "Thank you, Your Honour. Dr. Wilberforce, would such a movement be a threat to the stability of the Empire on the planet?"

"It could improve it considerably."

"Really? When was the last time a philosophy of absolute peace and brotherhood managed to rule unaided? For very long, anyway."

"The Vatican City state, the Swiss Confederation..." Wilberforce replied uncertainly.

"Neither of them what you would call empires, though. Besides, the Vatican City had Swiss guards posted and ever-increasing numbers of followers throughout the planet - some of whose methods hardly reflected the philosophy to which they claimed to adhere.

"Switzerland had its own defences, principal among which was its role as an international banking centre. Even the Buddhist nations felt it necessary to resort to an armed defence for their own self-preservation.

"The United World on Earth was born out of an horrific war and the desire for survival, and held together by vigilant policing in its first decades. The Vulcans believe that peace should not depend upon force, or the threat of force. They are quite correct - it shouldn't, but most of them recognise that, for now and for the foreseeable future, it does.

"I need hardly remind you, Dr. Wilberforce..." Cogley went on.

"But you can bet he's going to," Herrin muttered under her breath.

"...that it was in Christian times that Rome finally fell to the 'barbarians'. And these were Christians who *conquered* their way in. How long would you estimate that this empire would survive under the 'son-worshippers'?"

"I... don't know," replied Wilberforce.

"The defence counsel is inviting the witness to speculate," Herrin objected.

"If you can rephrase the question, Mr. Cogley," Gabriel suggested, "kindly do so."

"I put it to you, Dr. Wilberforce, that such a regime would have a low survival-rating. Do you agree?"

"It seems likely, although the philosophy is..."

"Oh, there's nothing wrong with a philosophy that says you should treat other people decently, as long as you adapt it to deal with all the ones who don't. My point is, Your Honour, members of the jury, that Captain Merik saw the best chance of survival for his crew with the Empire and in safeguarding the Empire - a regime that was already in place when he arrived. He was safeguarding those of his crew who had adapted. That concludes my questions for this witness."

Cogley returned to his seat and Gabriel blinked a few times before asking Idra Herrin if she wanted to cross-examine.

Herrin was about to reply in the negative when Areel Shaw jumped to her feet.

"I have a question, Your Honour," she announced.

"Well, you could have told me," muttered Herrin.

"I had to get in quickly, before you said no," Shaw replied from the corner of her mouth.

"Very well, Lieutenant-Commander Shaw," agreed Gabriel.

"Captain Kirk and his landing-party were fired upon and intercepted by rifle-carrying members of the sect. Would you agree that they appear to be adapting in order to survive?"

Wilberforce nodded. "That would seem to be the case," he replied.

"I think that improves their chances somewhat," Shaw observed. "No further questions, Your Honour."

"Do you wish to re-examine the witness, Mr. Cogley?"

"No, Your Honour."

Gabriel almost sighed with relief. "Then please step down, Dr. Wilberforce."

Wilberforce did so and returned to his seat in the public. Cogley rose to his feet again.

"The defence calls Captain Robert Merik."

The defendant walked to the witness chair at a brisk pace and dropped into it heavily. He placed his palm on the scanner and his record was read out by the computer.

"Identify Merik, Shipmaster Robert Mattheus. Born, Bethlehem, United African Zone, Earth, stardate 0251.2. Attended Starfleet Academy, stardates 0912.9 to 1112.6. Transferred to Merchant Marine Induction Centre, stardate 1112.7. Current status : ship's master, suspended pending official proceedings. Currently unassigned. Last assignment : Merchant Marine

survey vessel S.S. Beagle, position : ship's captain. Vessel reported destroyed, cause not as yet determined conclusively. Awards : ten years' service award."

Merik waited until he was sure the readout had finished, then declared :

"I hereby and solemnly affirm that the evidence I shall give will be truthful and that I shall withhold nothing." He looked towards Cogley expectantly. The defending counsel obligingly walked across the courtroom towards him.

"Captain Merik, you were in command of the S.S. Beagle for how long?" Cogley asked.

"Three years, one month and a few days."

"Was it your first command?"

"No," Merik replied. "I'd been in temporary command of the freighter Arcturus for about four months before I was transferred to a survey vessel, the Pelican."

"How did you come to be in temporary command of the Arcturus?" Samuel Cogley enquired, leaning on the barrier in front of the jury.

"I was already the First Officer, as well as Chief Navigator and Data-Retrieval Officer. Captain Bayonne, it transpired, had been doing some unofficial trading of his own, with the connivance of the Ship's Purser, Lieutenant Macomer. Macomer didn't do a very good job of covering their tracks and the message soon came through to head for the nearest base and for Captain Bayonne to report in person immediately upon arrival."

"Your Honour," Idra Herrin interrupted, "is any of this testimony relevant?"

"Mr. Cogley," Gabriel addressed him, "it had better be."

"I believe it to be so, Your Honour," Sam Cogley answered. "I believe that Captain Merik's past record will make clearer to the jury the character of the man they are to judge. For us to understand the circumstances of the loss of the Beagle and the subsequent events on planet eight-nine-two/four, we must be clear about certain previous events in my client's career. May Captain Merik proceed, Your Honour?"

"For the moment, yes, I suppose so," Gabriel sighed heavily. "The defendant will please continue."

"Well, Bayonne guessed the reason for the summons and blamed Macomer. He decided to dispose of all shipboard evidence, including Macomer, who was found dead under some heavy cargo that appeared to have shifted while he was checking it. I informed the base of the purser's death and was promptly ordered to relieve Captain Bayonne and confine him to quarters. We caught him on his way to the shuttle bay with all the luggage he could grab in a hurry. The return to base and the enquiry lasted until my transfer came along."

Cogley nodded. "Is it true that Captain Bayonne was armed when you caught him?"

"Yes, he was, but I persuaded him to give up his phaser before he could harm anyone with it."

"Wasn't it your report that helped convict Captain Bayonne and especially your work that tracked down misappropriated items from the Arcturus?" Cogley asked.

"It was claimed to be at the time," Merik admitted. "The identification numbers contributed to the most damning aspect of the matter."

"Which was, Captain?"

"Through an intermediary from a neutral planet, Bayonne and Macomer were shipping medium to high technology finished products to planets not sufficiently developed to warrant any such imports. Bayonne is still an inmate at a penal colony."

Cogley smiled slightly. "What was the charge on which he was convicted?"

Herrin looked up from the desktop-screen in front of her. "Objection!" she and Shaw both cried, rising in tandem.

"Only one of you, please," Gabriel replied. "On what grounds, Prosecutor?"

Herrin looked flustered. "This testimony is not even remotely connected with this case. The whole business about the Arcturus scandal should be ruled immaterial and struck from the record!"

"Counsel for the prosecution is over-reacting," replied Sam Cogley. "And panicking. This testimony is most relevant to the case before this court - otherwise, why would my learned opponent have been studying it on her readout so eagerly just before she objected?"

Gabriel's gaze shifted to Herrin. "Were you doing some revision on the case, Prosecutor?" he asked.

"Er... I was briefly scanning the record to determine whether it contained anything relevant..."

"I believe we may be about to discover that, Prosecutor," Gabriel interrupted her. "The witness may continue with his account."

"Bayonne was convicted," Merik said, in answer to Cogley's question, "on the charges of false accounting, embezzlement and theft of ship's stores entrusted to his authority as Captain of the Arcturus."

"Not of any violation of the Prime Directive?"

Herrin made a move to rise, but one look at Gabriel's expression caused her to reconsider.

"No," replied Merik. "They couldn't make that one stick."

"Why not?" Cogley asked.

Merik smiled. "He'd sold the goods through a non-Federation intermediary, who was, technically, the customer for the stolen goods. As the intermediary was from a relatively-advanced planet, there was no violation of the Prime Directive."

Merik settled further back in his seat and put his left hand over the back of the chair. He was smiling quite broadly now. "As the intermediary was not from a Federation world, the Federation couldn't touch him. Since the whole business was illegal in the first place, the matter of legal responsibility of a wholesaler just didn't apply. Bayonne was cleared of the

charge. And they couldn't prove that Macomer's death wasn't an accident, regardless of what everyone believed."

"For those interested," Cogley informed the court loudly, "the case is listed in Federation records, Federation versus Bayonne, stardate 3389.1 - 3390.7." He turned and said sotto voce to Herrin: "You can tell them where to look, can't you."

Herrin glowered at him by way of reply. Areel Shaw looked as if she wished Starfleet Academy hadn't dropped Merik in his fifth year.

"So," Cogley went on, "you advanced to the captaincy of the survey vessel Beagle. Describe your main objectives on such a vessel."

"Just about what it sounds like," Merik answered, shrugging his shoulders slightly. "Our job was to make primary surveys of uncharted planets, or planets which had not been subject to such a detailed survey, in order to locate suitable sources of minerals or ores for processing and manufacturing, possible medically-beneficial plant lifeforms or simply to log their existence, class and status."

"Not quite in the same league as, say, a Starship?"

"Hardly," the defendant replied. "We never contacted indigenous intelligent life if it could be at all avoided, however advanced they may have been. The best we managed was a botanical survey team or mineralogy follow-up when requested."

"I see," said Cogley, nodding. "Would you tell the court of the events that led to the Beagle arriving in orbit around planet eight-nine-two/four?"

Merik shifted slightly in his seat. "We were surveying that sector system by system and entered system eight-nine-two, passing the outermost planet - a gas supergiant, if anyone's interested - at a distance of about two hundred thousand kilometres.

"We surveyed the planets of the system as we detected them, noting that the fourth planet was class M, with considerable mineral deposits, not to mention a sizeable indigenous population. The fifth planet was of great interest - a large planet for a solid body, with what our scanners suggested were immense deposits of tritanium ore, zenite and a possible seam of dilithium about a kilometre below the surface. I ordered the ship to assume a close orbit around the planet so that we could take more definite readings and confirm or deny the first reports.

"Well, we never did find out for sure, because a shower of meteorites chose to approach the fifth planet at the same time as we did. I don't know how many penetrated our screens, but it was enough to knock out our main drive, wreck our subspace communications system and put us on emergency power and life-support for twelve hours until we had the impulse engines restarted. The impact also caused the deaths of physicist Ramon Ventura and technician Moshoie Dingaan when their laboratory suffered a direct hit. A summary of all the damage reports coming in from Chief Engineer Daniels and her people was that we needed to obtain iridium or its ore to repair damaged circuits and equipment. Ironically, an analysis of the damaged area showed that the meteorite that hit us contained more than enough for our needs. However, that meteorite burned up shortly after bouncing off our ship.

"Remembering the iridium deposits on the fourth planet, I ordered Volenkhov to put us on the most energy-efficient course to take up an orbit around it. It took us forty-one days to cross the space between the two planets, with Daniels fretting over the impulse engines almost

every minute of the trip. The food dispensers could only produce subsistence rations, and those in small quantities at eleven minute intervals, so none of us was gaining any weight. Without the iridium, the ship's systems would just give up after about a month."

"I see," said Cogley, nodding. "And would you please outline the events that impelled you to order your crew to the planet's surface."

"Once we'd established a stable orbit, we scanned for the deposits nearest the surface. Then I left Harrison in command while Daniels and Ileu Jolescu, one of our senior geologists, beamed down to the surface with me to check out the site before sending down any equipment."

Cogley raised an eyebrow. "Only three people, Captain?"

Merik nodded. "Yes, only three. We just needed to work out the equipment we'd want to extract the ore. Besides, the site wasn't far from a large inhabited area. The other main deposit had been directly under one. Once we'd decided on the necessary equipment, the mining and extraction team would be beamed down to get the ore, which would be refined and worked aboard the Beagle."

"What happened then?" Cogley prompted. "What led to your decision to remain there?"

"Daniels was halfway through compiling a list of plant items when the first warning shot sounded. We tried to run for cover, but the next shot hit Rachael Daniels in the back of the head and killed her instantly." Merik swallowed hard at the memory and looked uncomfortable.

"Jolescu's tricorder was wrecked by a bullet and I was shot in the arm when I reached for my communicator. A voice called for us to put our hands up, which we did as best we could. A man emerged from cover, carrying a high-velocity rifle, which he was pointing at us. We tried to convince him that we'd just been out for a stroll and hadn't meant to trespass, but he wasn't convinced. Apparently, we'd chosen an area that had recently become commercially viable as an oilfield, and he'd decided we were committing industrial espionage. He insisted we go with him to see his employer.

"The site manager didn't believe us either, especially not when he saw our communicators and what was left of the tricorder. He promptly called the city office and spoke to his direct superior, who apparently passed him on to one of the project directors. Once he put down the receiver, he signalled to the guard to escort us into his car, then he drove us into the city and to the company offices. There, we were taken to see the project director and a director of the company, whom we later found out was the pro-consul for the region, Claudius Marcus.

"They all started questioning us and we stuck to our story about wandering into the area accidentally. Marcus pointed out that the area was surrounded by a five metre high wire fence, so that the accident would have had to involve either a pole-vault or a set of wire-cutters. The site manager handed him the communicators and the remains of the tricorder, which he examined briefly and then dismissed the others, saying he'd handle the interrogation himself. He also doubled the guard outside his office.

"The pro-consul only needed a brief look at the tricorder circuits to realise they hadn't come from anywhere he was aware of. And, in his job, he was aware of just about everything happening on the planet. What he actually said, by way of an opening statement after the others had gone was : 'You're not from around here, are you?'. He asked us where we did

come from, what the communicators were and what we thought we were doing on restricted property. We didn't answer directly, just insisted that we hadn't been spying and that he let us go. He didn't even answer that, just continued firing questions at us. I was getting worried by this time. Our report back to the Beagle was becoming well overdue, we were both more than just hungry and my arm was hurting like hell.

"The door opened and someone handed Marcus a report, apparently a preliminary report on Rachael Daniels' body, which had been taken away for an autopsy. Marcus suggested they might decide to examine a male subject too, and which of us did we think he should choose. I replied that if he was going to give us medical attention, could he start with my arm, whereupon he got up and took a look at it, remarked that it looked quite painful and gave it a sharp twist. Through the agony, I heard him bark his previous questions at me. I just managed to say 'You wouldn't believe it,' before I passed out.

"I came around to find myself in a cell, with my arm bearing the marks of local medical attention. It had been sewn up with what I assume was catgut and stank of some kind of antiseptic solution. I was alone and had no idea where Jolescu was. I looked around the cell, which was very solidly put together, and concluded that I could have escaped if I'd had a phaser, which I didn't, but otherwise would have to remain where I was until someone decided to let me out. I didn't know how long I'd been unconscious, but was certain Harrison would have decided we were having difficulties. Before long he'd be sending down a reconnaissance party to look for us, and the last thing we needed was more people on the planet and fewer to keep the Beagle running.

"It seemed like several hours before two guards came to take me back to see Claudius Marcus, this time in the pro-consul's office. Jolescu was already there, a couple of bruises starting to swell on his face, and looking as if he'd had a hard time. Marcus told me Jolescu had told him everything. I replied that that couldn't have taken him long. Marcus thumped the desk and snapped at me to stop wasting time and admit we were barbarians from another planet. I knew he'd guessed that, so I just looked puzzled. A stain down one leg of Jolescu's trousers showed that Marcus was no beginner at interrogation techniques. I'd found a crack in one corner of my cell that had acted as a convenient drain, so he'd have to wait a while to use that one on me. I didn't know how much Jolescu had told him, but I don't think it had been much beyond his name and possibly the fact that he was a geologist. I never got the chance to ask him.

"Marcus was about to turn on me, when the door opened and three guards shoved Bill Harrison, Dr. Crabbe, our medical officer, and Arthur Duncan, one of our engineers, into the office. I tried to give them looks of mild curiosity, but Jolescu's expression was one of despair. Harrison looked me straight in the eye and Crabbe promptly addressed me as 'Captain', before Harrison nudged him. Marcus asked one of the guards for a report on their capture. Apparently, they'd beamed down to precisely the same location as we had and had been caught just as quickly. Two more members of the recon. party had been killed, one engineer and one technician. Harrison had been using his communicator to call for help when they grabbed him. Marcus smiled at that and held up a communicator. 'So now we know this is a kind of radio,' he told us. Then his smile disappeared and he told the guards to wait outside.

"It seems he'd decided he knew enough about us to know what to do about us. We were, he told us, aliens from some other world. He didn't know where and he didn't much care. Their science did know about astronomy and didn't believe that the stars were 'lights shining through from heaven', whatever the son-worshippers might have said. What he did care very much about, he said, was the effect we would have on his planet and its society once we reported its existence to our own people. He liked things the way they were and intended to see that they stayed that way. He knew we could communicate with our ship and suggested

that I do so and order the rest of the crew to join us on the planet's surface. I refused. I pointed out that we had a law which would prohibit any of our people interfering with his planet's culture. He replied that his society had a multitude of laws, many of which were almost certainly being broken at that very moment around the planet. I assured him that none of our people would break the Prime Directive. He said that was all very well, if it were true, but we were not the only people in the universe and once the existence of his planet became known, it could become widely known. The only answer, as far as he was concerned, was that the crew of the Beagle should remain on eight-nine-two/four, either alive or dead. It was up to us. Frankly, he told us, it would be safer if we were dead, then he would be assured of our non-interference. But, he went on, if we did have this determination not to interfere, then why not allow us to live and settle on the planet - merge into the native population. He didn't believe in killing people en masse just for its own sake, unless we counted gladiatorial games of course. This shook us a little. We hadn't had a chance to study their culture at all and knew only what we'd seen since our arrival. He checked his watch and said perhaps we'd like to see an example of what he meant. It wasn't a question. He called the guards back into the room and had them escort us to the arena adjoining the cells.

"Marcus sat in one of the seats in the adjudicator's box and the guards sat Harrison, Crabbe and me in the other three. I was just looking around to see what had happened to the other two, when they appeared through a doorway onto the arena itself. Each of them had been equipped with a net and trident, which they were regarding puzzledly. I heard the voice of an announcer saying something about 'barbarians' and noticed for the first time that the event was being filmed by some primitive kind of video equipment, a television camera. From the opposite doorway came two large men wearing gladiatorial costumes, each armed with a short sword and a small, round shield. It just didn't seem real, even when the combat began and the gladiators started attacking my men. The reality of it struck very hard when Jolescu staggered, swung his trident at his opponent, who sliced the end off it with his sword and followed up by stabbing Jolescu through the chest. I can still see the geologist's expression of shocked surprise as he looked at me before crumpling to the ground. Duncan managed to hit his opponent on the side of the helmet, but lost his net trying to throw it. He hurled his trident at the gladiator, who deflected it with his shield and then had Duncan at his mercy. Harrison tried to leap forward and help, but was held down by the guards.

"Marcus asked me if I was ready to order my men 'ashore' yet. I hesitated, still shaken by seeing Jolescu killed like that. Marcus lost patience and gave a signal, at which the gladiator stabbed Duncan through the chest. The engineer let out a last gasp and fell dead. I could only look on helplessly as the bodies were taken away. Could I have saved Duncan at least? I didn't know what the chances were of repairing the Beagle at this time, or my decision might have been easier. With Daniels and Duncan both dead, our chances were approaching nil. If Duncan hadn't been killed, we might have had a chance, but not if the crew were all on the surface. Either way, the ship was almost certainly lost. I still don't know why Harrison brought Duncan with him - probably to assess the mining situation if Daniels were unavailable.

"Claudius Marcus didn't give me time to think. He asked if I were ready to order my crew ashore now, or was I prepared to have Harrison and Crabbe take part in the next event after the two minute commercial break. I knew Harrison could look after himself - he was the sort who belonged on a recruiting poster, but didn't have the academic skills for Starfleet. Crabbe was no fighter, though, and wouldn't have lasted any longer, if as long, as Jolescu. I asked if I could have time to think about it. Marcus said I had ninety seconds left.

"I pointed out that if Crabbe and Harrison were killed that would leave only me for him to threaten. I asked what guarantee he had that my crew wouldn't all be put into the arena on arrival. Of course, I knew that before long there'd be little choice for my crew but to beam

down, before the Beagle tumbled out of orbit, but I was pretty sure he didn't know that. He replied that there wasn't much entertainment in watching people who couldn't fight, however briefly. The only ones who'd end up in the arena would be those suited to it or deserving of it. He also added that he didn't think I'd last as long as Jolescu, but that Harrison looked more promising. Apparently, though, my words had had some effect, because he had us escorted back to his office as two more gladiators came into the arena. Harrison asked Marcus who they'd have to fight now we were going. 'Each other,' he replied.

"As we approached the office door, an officer marched up to the pro-consul with a report that more 'barbarians' had been captured, this time inside the city. Harrison's signal had prompted someone to send a rescue party to try and find us. Marcus laughed briefly.

"If many more of you arrive of their own accord, I shan't need you to order them to,' he remarked. I was beginning to think the same myself. Many more landing-parties and there wouldn't be enough left aboard the Beagle to take her out of the system, even if they could repair her sufficiently. He told the guards to take Harrison and Crabbe and put them in the cells with the new arrivals. He decided to interview me further in the comfort of his quarters, rather than his office.

"I was surprised at the soft furnishings in the pro-consul's quarters. It seemed a little out of character for a man who had been so tough and uncompromising. He waved me towards a chair and I sat down, still a little shaken by the deaths of my crewmates. I didn't know it at the time, but a second rescue party, led by Alexei Volenkhov, had beamed down just outside the city limits, locked on to our communicators and was heading towards us. The first rescue party had warned them of some of the hazards and had managed to report their own capture. Marcus asked me if I wanted anything to eat or drink. I did, but said I didn't. He said he never used drugs in interrogations as he'd never been satisfied with the results and now did I want anything to eat or drink. I figured I had less chance of breaking under questioning if I kept my strength up, so I accepted his offer. He called out and a woman served us some wine and some roasted meat - I realised later that she was a slave - which I tried not to wolf down too eagerly.

"Marcus then gave a brief summary of who we were and where we were from and what he thought we were doing there. He'd pretty much worked out the first two, but had some idea that we might be sizing the planet up for exploitation, or so he said. I tried to reassure him on that point, insisting we were just studying the planet for academic purposes. The idea seemed to puzzle him, and I don't think it even occurred to him that anyone would do such a thing. He bluntly accused me of being the spearhead of a major colonisation or resource-extraction force to take over the planet. He'd heard one of my people mention iridium and he knew there were deposits of it where we'd been found. Did we have a major iridium concession on some distant world, he asked. I blurted out that we'd only wanted enough iridium for our repairs, then we'd leave and never bother him or his wretched planet again.

"I knew I shouldn't have mentioned the word 'repairs' a split second after I said it, but Marcus had already seized upon it. He concluded - correctly, of course - that our vessel was damaged, and badly. That weakened our position considerably. Then a messenger arrived to tell him that four 'barbarians' had been captured within half a mile of us. Marcus's gaze moved from the messenger over to me and he asked me if I was ready to order the rest of my people down before they all followed in stages.

"Well, what could I do? He was right. I decided the only thing to do was bargain with the man - not that I was really in any position to. I wanted guarantees that we'd be properly treated and accepted into his society. He shrugged and replied that those who adapted would be accepted. Those who didn't would most likely die. I wanted us to hang on to our communicators, but he would have none of that. Too risky, he said, not only in the wrong

hands, but also in ours. We could call another ship to rescue us, should one come along, and then his planet would no longer be unknown to the galaxy. He then surprised me by suggesting I join his political staff. He'd keep our equipment safe and I could keep an eye on it. He said I could be useful to him. I decided that was the best offer we were going to get and said I'd order my people down. He smiled with what was almost contempt at my capitulation. In reality, it was more an acceptance of the inevitable.

"In the course of the four landing-parties, we'd lost seven people altogether. We lost Crabbe and navigator Olsen when the second rescue party was brought in and Harrison led an unsuccessful escape attempt. By ordering the remaining thirty-two of my crew down to the planet, I almost certainly saved lives that would have otherwise been lost. That doesn't mean I felt good about it. I knew I had had no other choice, but there was always a nagging doubt in my mind - a little voice telling me I could have found a way out, that I'd taken the coward's route to safety. No-one likes to admit that circumstances got the better of them, I guess.

"So my crew abandoned the Beagle. I ordered them to set it to leave orbit and self-destruct, so that it wouldn't tumble down on to the surface in one great mass and inflict any damage. Marcus had me proclaimed First Citizen, complete with a false biography, almost immediately the last of my crew arrived. He also declared a holiday to celebrate the good omen of a bright meteor shower soon afterwards - a sign that my term of office would be an auspicious one, not to mention visible evidence of my ship self-destructing. Most of the debris headed out of orbit, but a little burned up in the atmosphere. I never did find out what happened to the previous First Citizen and I didn't like to ask."

"What were the duties of a First Citizen?" asked Cogley, gazing at Merik's feet.

"In my case, it was pretty much a rubber-stamping job. Marcus wanted it that way, and I was in no position to argue. I had to attend the games a minimum of four times each week, to give the decision at the end of each heat."

"The decision being that of whether the loser lived or died, I presume," Gabriel interjected.

Merik nodded slowly and went on. "I never actually condemned any of my own men in the arena. At first, I deliberately used to let them live - until Marcus made it clear that I was to stop doing so before it ruined the ratings..."

"Ratings?" Gabriel queried.

"An archaic system of judging a programme's popularity by means of a supposedly random sample of the viewers, your honour," Cogley supplied. "Generally held responsible for the near-disappearance of quality programmes on television networks on Earth a couple of centuries ago."

"As programmes are sponsored by business organisations promoting their products," Merik explained, "lower ratings means advertisements reaching less of the population and increases the likelihood of sponsorship being withdrawn. After that, I made a point of not attending when any of the Beagle crew was involved. Marcus always liked to tell me when one of them was killed, mind you. He used such occasions to lecture me on Roman superiority. If any of them won, I had to find it out myself - I don't think he mentioned Bill Harrison's name for about six years.

"I did make public appearances, but was never allowed to say anything that wasn't dictated to me and carefully rehearsed. Any edicts issued in my name had been signed by me,

but written by Marcus or his office staff. As Lord Of The Games, I had a directorship - a non-voting one, naturally - in Empire Television and ownership of a few gladiators."

There was a murmur of shocked disapproval at this and Cogley looked up at Merik.

"You *owned* gladiators? And slaves?" he asked.

"Yes. Everyone else did in my circle, and I could hardly be the exception. If nothing else, it might start a trend and interfere with the existing culture. So I owned slaves and gladiators, just like everybody else of my rank. I didn't contribute much to history, but throughout time there have been local politicians like I was, most of them in fact. As a matter of fact, Flavius Maximus was one of my gladiators, and made us both quite wealthy before he ran off to worship the son. Oh yes, I was obliged to attend religious festivals at the temples on important occasions, sometimes performing sacrifices - burning some recently-defrosted meat usually. That was part of the culture too."

"You didn't take it too seriously, yourself?" asked Cogley.

"Hardly anyone did," replied Merik. "It was traditional, mainly, and from a sense of politeness, almost. They'd hardly name cars or toothpaste after deities that they genuinely worshipped, after all."

"And things carried on smoothly until the Enterprise arrived?" Cogley asked.

"More or less, yes. For me, anyway. You've seen how some of the others fared."

"Did you ever consider their dependants, like Mrs. Duchinski?" asked Cogley. Herrin looked at him sharply, suddenly apprehensive.

"Oh, her!" replied Merik, smiling. "She can hardly blame me for making her a widow - especially as Tadeusz Duchinski isn't dead."

The public gallery reacted with some laughter and a lot of murmuring until ordered into silence.

"You mean that he is still alive on eight-nine-two/four?" asked Gabriel.

"Not only alive, but settled in with a young wife and six children," Merik answered.

This time a roar of laughter erupted from jury and public alike, save for a shriek of rage from Sonya Duchinski at the news that she was not a widow after all.

"The dependants weren't forgotten," Merik continued. "There just wasn't anything we could do about them where we were. We all had to start again as best we could. When the Enterprise arrived, I knew my time was up, unless they agreed to stay there. Unless the Federation now conceals the existence of eight-nine-two/four, someone from outside it could interfere with its culture."

"Yet you helped the men from the Enterprise to escape."

"I couldn't stand by and watch them be murdered. Not only did I manage to get hold of a communicator, I allowed Flavius Maximus to escape and head for the arena, thus preventing Kirk's execution. I hadn't planned on coming with them. I was expecting to die during the escape. However, Captain Kirk decided otherwise and here I am."

Cogley pursed his lips and nodded. "No further questions, Your Honour."

"Prosecutor, do you wish to cross-examine the witness?" Gabriel asked Herrin, who was already rising to her feet.

"I most certainly do, Your Honour," replied Herrin. She strode towards the witness stand, the light of battle in her eyes. "Mr. Merik..."

"*Captain* Merik," replied Merik, smiling.

"Let's not go through all that again," sighed Gabriel.

"You realise that most of your evidence is subjective and cannot be corroborated," Herrin pointed out.

"I gave it under oath," Merik replied firmly, "and it is the truth."

"Yes, well, we know what you do with oaths..." began Herrin.

"Objection!" cried Cogley. "We know nothing of the kind, and it wouldn't be evidence if we did."

"Objection sustained," Gabriel agreed.

"The point is," Herrin persisted, "how can we know whether to believe your evidence?"

"I rather think that's up to the jury, isn't it?" Merik asked her, smiling. "I'm willing to trust their judgement, aren't you?"

"I have every confidence that the jury will be able to reach a verdict based on the facts - if they are presented with them."

"Such as the Widow Duchinski?" Merik enquired softly. "I have given the court a factual account of the relevant events."

"Very well. How do you explain your failure to avoid the meteorite shower around the fifth planet?"

"Our orbital path took us into the meteorites, which were making a close approach to the planet. We had hardly any time to react, and the Beagle was not the most manoeuvrable of vessels even in peak condition. We just couldn't get out of the way."

"Why didn't you beam back to the Beagle as soon as you were attacked?"

"Well, for one thing I had a bullet in my arm from trying to reach my communicator. For another, it might not have been wise to beam up in full view of those guards."

"Was your ship as disabled as you make out? You could surely have made it to the next planet and not bothered anyone."

Merik looked impatient. "The Beagle was a mess. We only just made it to the fourth planet. We might just have reached the third planet, but it was further around its orbital path than the fourth and fifth ones, and was class D anyway, without any signs of iridium deposits."

"How do you explain the Enterprise's failure to locate your recorder-marker?"

"Simple. It was never launched..."

"You mean you prevented its launch," Herrin accused triumphantly.

"From the ground? No, it couldn't be launched."

"The launcher is well protected, even on a merchant marine vessel. Are you telling us the meteorite managed to destroy the recorder-marker or its launcher?"

"The recorder-marker and launcher were fine. The impact just blew all the circuits controlling the launcher and their repair was hardly our top priority. The recorder-marker must have burned up when the Beagle was destroyed, or the Enterprise would probably have found it before finding me."

"Did you decide to stay to save your crew, or was it really that Marcus offered you this important job with all the perks that went with it and you saw it as a golden opportunity?"

"I had no choice but to order my crew down. I just bluffed until I obtained the best deal I could for them and for me."

"What was your relationship with the pro-consul in those six years?"

Merik looked uncomfortable. "He was easy enough to work for..."

"How about outside of work?"

"He introduced me around his friends, although he himself was the nearest I could describe as a close friend."

"Let me put it this way - did you have any female close friends on the planet?"

"No, not really."

"How about sexual contacts?"

"I don't think that's relevant..."

"Isn't it? I think you were attracted to the pro-consul on a personal level, and that's why you gave in."

"Yes, I did find him attractive once I knew him better. But at the time I ordered my crew to abandon ship, I barely knew the man and liked him even less. He knew what my feelings were and saw them as a sign of weakness."

"He didn't respond, then?"

"Only with a kind of amused contempt. He was one of the boys - only had female slaves around him if possible and seemed to have women friends all over the province. I wasn't his type, all right?"

"I think the jury can work out the facts from your statement. Now, as to your crew. We've seen how some of them died in the arena, but you say you were powerless to prevent it."

Could you have prevented them entering the arena in the first place?"

"Only they could have prevented that. If they chose to be gladiators, or committed a crime that put them in there, they knew what to expect. I made sure they were briefed. The Romans believe men should fight their own battles, and we were on their planet."

"You claim no-one, yourself included, took the official religions too seriously, yet ex-Senator Pluvius Aurelius Septimus is reported to have said he worshipped them too, his tone suggesting genuine belief."

"Well, he would. He genuinely believed whatever religion he took part in. I didn't say that no-one believed it, just that very few did. He was one of the very few. The commitment needed to be a son-worshipper would have been just right for him. He believes it, lights shining through from heaven and all."

"All the same you saw the son-worshippers as a challenge to be destroyed..."

"As a nuisance, stirring up trouble and threatening to put us on the path of credulous superstition, possibly even driving us into a dark age. Non-violent they may have been, but harmless they were not. A philosophy, even a well-meaning one, can kill more people than any aimless killer."

"But should you have interfered in their emergence?"

"Absolutely not. That's why I signed any order Marcus gave me to control their activities. Any other First Citizen would have done just that."

"You still made quite a good living from it, didn't you?" snapped Herrin.

"It went with the job. I haven't got it now, have I?"

"But your crew is still there, what's left of it. How will their presence affect the planet's history?"

"I don't know. Probably not much. They're not in positions of great power, any of them."

"And their descendants?"

"Will be raised as Romans, in the Roman way. I'd say the culture is more likely to affect them than vice versa."

"Do you have any descendants of your own there?"

"I'm positive I have not. I find that's one advantage of it, don't you?" Merik asked looking Herrin in the eyes.

"No further questions, Your Honour," Herrin said angrily, glaring at Merik.

Gabriel looked slightly nonplussed, but shifted his gaze towards Cogley.

"Do you wish to re-examine, Mr. Cogley?"

"No, Your Honour, I do not."

"The defendant can step down," said Gabriel, carefully avoiding the question of whether to say 'Mister' or 'Captain'. Merik rose and returned to his seat next to Cogley, who was smiling. Herrin was still scowling and Areel Shaw was trying to reassure her.

"Your Honour," Cogley informed the court. "That completes the case for the defence."

"Very well," acknowledged Gabriel. "This court will adjourn until fourteen hours, local time."

"All rise!" the Ensign ordered as the judge left the courtroom.

Spock carried his trayful of assorted vegetables to Kirk's table and sat down next to the Captain and opposite McCoy. He looked around briefly.

"Will Prosecutor Herrin not be joining us?" he asked.

"She's in her office, calming down over a light lunch," Shaw informed him. "I hope her closing statement can convince the jury. I'm not sure what they think now."

"If they judge by the relevant facts, they should convict on most charges," Spock opined. "We must hope that they ignore the irrelevant."

"Fat chance," grunted McCoy. "How can they ignore what's been put in front of them?"

"Especially when it's even faintly of a sensational nature," agreed Kirk. "I never really thought about Merik's preferences. Even at the Academy, he always avoided the question. Although he never had a woman with him, he wasn't alone in that. How did Herrin know?"

"Maybe it takes one to spot one," suggested Shaw. "I knew a little about her personal life, but she never talked about it."

"Separated her professional life from her private life," said Kirk. "Very sensible. When I'm on duty, my female crewmembers are just crewmembers. Off-duty is another thing altogether. Funny that Merik doesn't seem to have formed any liaison at all."

"He never said that," replied Areel Shaw. "He managed to duck around the question. Besides, a preference for one sex doesn't mean an automatic attraction to all members of that sex. I'm not attracted to *all* men after all!"

"Merik certainly left Idra Herrin discomfited," said Kirk. "I'd say he won that one on points."

"Let's hope she has the last laugh," replied McCoy.

Herrin gazed out of her window at the Starbase complex. It managed to be functional without being ugly, although it did tend to sprawl over the scene. She continued gazing at it, her hands clasped behind her back, as the annunciator sounded.

"Come in," she answered when it sounded a second time. The door opened and Spock entered the office.

"Prosecutor," he said, "am I correct in assuming that you are troubled by this morning's exchange?"

"You have a talent for understatement, Commander Spock," Herrin replied. "I'm not just troubled - I'm angry, very angry."

"Angry?" enquired Spock. "With whom, and for what reason?"

Herrin spun around and slammed her fists onto her desk. "With that man Merik and his sudden burst of cleverness. With Sam Cogley for briefing Merik so well. With Captain Kirk for bringing Cogley into this, but mostly... Mostly with myself for letting him get to me like that. For putting myself into a situation where he could do it."

"It was an unfortunate chance that Merik responded as he did, but I see no reason to resent the implication..."

"No," replied Herrin, straightening up. "You wouldn't. It isn't logical, I know it isn't. Well, neither am I. I'm not a Vulcan. No, I'm not ashamed of my personal life, but I didn't like the way he answered me back. I thought I was on to something, and I was. I thought it was relevant, which it was in a way. I thought it was important and might win the case for us, but it wasn't that important and it gave Merik a chance to make me look stupid. *That's* what really annoys me. I thought I was so clever to see he wasn't telling us something, and he made me look such a fool!"

"It may have been relevant, Prosecutor," Spock informed her. "That is something we shall probably never know. You should, however, keep one thing in mind."

"And what's that?"

"Merik, not you, is on trial. He may yet be found guilty. Your closing statement will help to decide that."

"My closing statement. What do I say now? So much has been said, but how much of it do I need to refer to? And Sam Cogley is a tough act to follow."

"He is probably saying the same about you at this very moment. Merik is still in the detention cells."

"Yes." Herrin gave a wry smile. "Do you know why I became a prosecutor, Mr. Spock? It's because I care about people, the innocent people who make up most of the population of this Federation of ours. And because I care about them, I do my damndest to make sure scum like Arrho Katulin are put where they can't make life miserable for the rest of us. That's why I was so satisfied at his being tried on Deneb Five, because it made sure he'd never bother anyone else again."

"And do you remember the news reports? We were criticised for approving the death sentence on that bastard! 'Vindictive', they called it. We knew there was no way to rehabilitate him - we'd taken expert advice on it. Even Donald Cory said it would be a waste of time, but not the media. It would have served them right to be put in the cell next to him, or with him, for a day. They'd have changed their minds quickly enough."

"Merik's not in the same league, but the case has attracted a lot of attention. Frankly, he's no danger to the public, but he *has* broken his oath and he shouldn't be allowed to get away with it. If he does, it creates a precedent. Then one day someone will be charged with a

really serious breach of the Prime Directive, and this case could let *them* get away with it. What I say next could stop that happening, so I must get it right. You understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

Spock nodded. "I understand, Prosecutor. But I think the public is capable of making the distinction between different cases. However, I believe Merik to be guilty, at least morally, and I believe that punishment should be meted out accordingly. As to your closing statement, I believe you will find you already know most of what you must say. Whether Merik is found guilty or not guilty, I believe you will say the right things."

Herrin let out a deep breath and nodded. "Thank you, Mr. Spock. If you'll excuse me, I must work on my speech. Could you let Lieutenant-Commander Shaw know I need her assistance, please?"

"Indeed I shall, Prosecutor," replied Spock as he left the room. Areel Shaw was just approaching as the door closed behind him.

"Is it safe to go in?" asked Shaw apprehensively.

"It is now," replied Spock. "Prosecutor Herrin says she needs your assistance."

"And does she?"

"Perhaps. It would be as well to provide it."

Areel nodded her agreement and entered the office.

Merik was almost cheerful as Cogley entered the cell and sat down. Cogley's smile was narrower and the wad of paper he was carrying seemed to be a heavy load.

"Don't start celebrating yet, young man," Cogley warned. "Juries aren't always easy to predict. Prosecutor Herrin is not without talent and could still tilt the balance her way."

"I think I shook her up a little," replied Merik.

"Maybe too much. It was rather cruel of you..."

"She asked for that!" snapped Merik. "Besides, look at the things she's called me in the course of this trial. I think I'm entitled to get some of my own back."

"And she'll get back at you. That young woman will turn her anger into argument, her venom into invective and her convictions into yours. She's not done yet. I don't want you looking smug in court - don't forget it's you the jury can still put in a rehabilitation colony for an unspecified period if they feel you deserve it, not her. Now, I have a closing speech to work on, and I'm going to need you to know how to look as I say it..."

Gabriel resumed his seat with an expression that suggested he could have chosen a more comfortable one.

"Mr. Cogley, would you please present the closing statement for the defence," he said.

Sam Cogley rose and faced the jury. "Your Honour, members of the jury, this case has seen accusations and counter-accusations of the most horrendous kind. You should not allow yourselves to be swayed by pleas to emotionalism, but by the facts of this case alone.

"The facts are very simple and very clear. My client, Captain Merik, through no fault of his own, found himself in command of a stricken vessel with barely enough power to reach a possible source of repair material. At no time did he intend to abandon his ship while he still believed it could be repaired. Faced with the sheer impossibility of obtaining the materials for repairs, he was forced to order his crew to abandon ship and destroy it before it became a hazard to life on the planet below.

"Despite having little or no bargaining power, he succeeded in obtaining certain guarantees from local officials regarding the safety and resettlement of his crew on the planet's surface. He also used the position of importance he was given to protect his crew as far as he was able. He briefed his crew well enough for them to blend in with the society on the planet and not interfere with its development. With thirty-eight of them dispersed among a population of five thousand million Romans, their effects would be negligible. True, there was only one Edison, one Archimedes, but survey vessel crews are not composed of such extraordinary talents.

"We have heard how Captain Merik went along with the customs and traditions of the planet, despite any distaste he might have felt for them. The only slight deviation from this was when he tried to help members of his crew to survive the arena, abandoning even this when it became evident that it would only endanger the rest of his crew further. Even then, he declined to attend fights involving members of the Beagle's crew as he had no wish to order any of them killed.

"By allowing himself to be guided by the pro-consul in the duties of a First Citizen, Captain Merik ensured that he did not take any actions that would affect the progress of the civilisation there. From the recordings we have seen, it should be evident that the indigenous culture has not been deflected from its proper path by the Beagle's arrival.

"Even when other Federation citizens were threatened, Captain Merik could not bring himself to use his powers, such as they were, to obtain their release. He took the actions he did, in stealing the communicator, believing that he would be killed as a result and the incident explained away convincingly by the authorities. His attempt to persuade Captain Kirk and his crew to remain on the planet stemmed not from a fear of apprehension and prosecution, but from a genuine belief that their return to Federation space would result in further investigation by space vessels and eventual contamination of the native civilisation.

"Those are the facts of the case, members of the jury, the facts upon which your verdict must be based. There are no grounds for conviction here, not on a single one of the charges levelled at my client. The only verdict you can reach is one of not guilty on all counts. I ask that you reach it quickly and spare Captain Merik further anguish. He has already had plenty that he does not deserve." Cogley bowed briefly to the jury and resumed his seat.

"Prosecutor Herrin, you may present the closing statement for the prosecution," said Gabriel.

Herrin stood up and walked slowly towards the jury, beginning her statement as she went.

"My learned opponent has told you not to be swayed by pleas to emotionalism. I am pleased that he did so, for it has saved me from saying it myself. He and I are also in

agreement over your reaching a verdict based on the facts, although his view of what constitute the facts of this case is rather unusual.

"The facts of a case cannot be determined from the highly-subjective testimony of the defendant himself, particularly when he knows full well that no-one can come forward to confirm or deny his statements. Members of the jury, you must bear in mind that it is the testimony of a man desperately trying to save his own skin. Would such a man, even under oath, cling doggedly to the truth, however damning it may be? You must also remember that Merik is accused of violating one oath. Would he be unduly worried about breaking another? He may believe he can fool a jury. I am confident that he has not.

"However hard he may have tried to save his crewmembers whenever they appeared in the arena, enough of them died in it and outside it after his decision to settle on planet eight-nine-two/ four. Maybe he did try, but he does not seem to have succeeded.

"That he did have some effect on the people of that planet is evident from the opinion held of him by the 'son-worshippers' encountered by Captain Kirk and his companions. Despite the image of a puppet that he has portrayed, it would seem that Merik was not without a certain notoriety of his own. A former senator would surely know who was a puppet and who was really a butcher. Was all this bloodshed really in the interests of non-interference? I, for one, cannot believe this was the only way to avoid contamination.

"There can be no denying that Merik tried to persuade Captain Kirk, Commander Spock and Doctor McCoy to violate the Prime Directive themselves. Was it from a fear of possible contamination from a Federation and Starfleet sworn to avoid anything of the kind? Or was it merely the fear of being removed from his comfortable new life and punished for his crimes?

"It is possible that the Beagle was beyond repair by the time of its destruction. It is equally possible that its condition was allowed to deteriorate by Merik's failure to ensure that key personnel were not lost before repairs could even be attempted. His actions in this matter seem at the least incompetent and at worst contrived to bring about a decision he had already reached. Given such apparent ineptitude, how can he justify accepting a position of responsibility in a progressing, but relatively primitive, society?

"Further, I would remind you, members of the jury, that when taking the Prime Directive oath, personnel state that they will, if necessary, sacrifice their own lives to avoid interference with undeveloped societies. Unpleasant as the thought may be, would it not have better ensured that the society remained free from contamination if the crew of the Beagle had chosen to die rather than be forced to beam down to the planet's surface? Merik himself, by his own admission, seems to have been willing to do anything to avoid death.

"Let us not forget, either, that there are still some dozen or so Beagle crewmembers living on planet eight-nine-two/ four, with all their skills, knowledge and training available for whatever purposes they may wish or be driven to. The current pro-consul of that province may not wish to exploit their skills or make their presence known, but who is to say that he will not be succeeded - perhaps already has been succeeded - by someone less cautious? The threat of contamination has not disappeared, even in the event that no contamination has actually occurred. There is no time limit on the Prime Directive, members of the jury, let us not forget that.

"I urge you not to concern yourself with whatever anguish may be suffered by the defendant. Consider that which may result from his actions in settling his crew in amongst a less-developed civilisation. You must convict on all charges. Discuss the evidence fully and consider each item on its merits and you will see the truth of the matter quite clearly. The

truth being that Robert Merik is guilty of all the charges, not merely by omission, but by conscious design. He must be convicted and punished accordingly or this court will be granting a licence to break the Prime Directive that will undermine the very principles of the Federation and Starfleet. We do not have the right to do that. I know that you will not do that." Herrin smiled briefly, glanced towards Gabriel and returned to her seat.

Gabriel shifted slightly and faced the jury.

"Members of the jury," he addressed them, "you will shortly be taken away to consider your verdict on the charges brought against the defendant. You may convict or acquit by a unanimous verdict or by a majority of ten-to-two or eleven-to-one either way on any of the charges. I feel it my duty to remind you that the burden of proof lies with the prosecution. If you feel that the charge has been proved, then you must convict, but it is not enough to decide that the defendant has failed to disprove the charge. Whether you convict by a majority or by a unanimous verdict will affect the sentence I can impose for the offence. Should you feel that leniency is called for, you may so recommend. There is no official limit on the time you make take for discussion. However, when I feel that sufficient time has elapsed I may recall you to the court to enquire whether you are able to reach a verdict. Should you believe yourselves unable to do so, then you should ask to return to the courtroom." The judge's gaze moved along the jury, making sure he looked each of them in the eye before moving on.

"As to the charges, you must decide whether the defendant's contact with the indigenous life-forms on the planet was intentional or accidental and, if the latter, whether he could have avoided such contact. You must also consider how much he revealed about his origins and background to the native inhabitants and how much was revealed by other members of his crew or divined by those they contacted. If it was divined by certain the planet's inhabitants, does it still constitute a breach of the Prime Directive by the defendant? The same applies to knowledge passed on by members of his crew. As their commander, he was responsible for their behaviour, but does this apply to any remarks they may have made or even confessions extracted under duress or torture? How greatly could the planet's culture be affected by such revelations? These are all questions to be considered.

"Was the S.S. Beagle repairable at the time the defendant ordered the crew to abandon it? Indeed, the question is not whether the ship was repairable, but whether the remaining crew was capable of repairing it. The fact that the vessel could have been repaired by a spacedock or by the replacement of a number of components is irrelevant when there was no spacedock available and no supply of spare parts. The defendant is the only person present with any knowledge of the situation of that time, and he himself was not aboard the Beagle. Should the crew have left the ship or died with it to be certain of avoiding contamination of the planet's cultural development? Self-sacrifice is not an easy decision to make - it is harder still to order someone else to make it. Would the deaths of the crew still aboard the vessel actually have prevented any contamination or even have limited it? According to the defendant, several of his crew, himself included, were already on the planet's surface." Gabriel entwined his fingers on his desk and leaned forward.

"The prosecution has shown us extracts from audio-visual broadcasts from the planet, demonstrating the way in which certain of the Beagle's crew have adapted - or failed to adapt - to conditions there. Some are clearly employed as doctors or researchers and you may choose to regard this as indicative of cultural interference. The researchers could pass on knowledge to the people of eight-nine-two/four that should not become known to them for another century or more. The doctors could wipe out diseases that should be taking their toll of casualties, suffering or just plain misery for generations to come. The resulting drop in the death rate could trigger a catastrophic swelling of the indigenous population like that seen on Earth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. On a smaller scale, the reduction in

manhours lost to illness could result in a faster rate of progress than should have occurred.

"However, the researchers appear to be working for a commercial toiletries company typical of the cultural level of the planet. The scope for research in such organisations was generally limited to the personal interests of the directors and shareholders and the budgets imposed by the accountants, who were ignorant of and uninterested in the possibilities presented by any discoveries made. The xenobiologist, working as a doctor, would still have to work with the equipment and materials of the period. She might know about laser-scalpels and tissue-welders, but could she construct either from scratch? At best, her knowledge of organic chemistry could lead others to new pharmaceutical discoveries, but we do not know if any such discoveries have taken place. Even if they have, is the defendant responsible for it? That is what you must decide. Others seem to have settled for less-involved roles as shopkeepers or accountants. Apart from a possible price-war or fraud scandal, I cannot see them having too great an influence. Few changes to the planet's cultural level are evident, although perhaps six or seven years is not long enough for such changes to become apparent. This court cannot wait until they do before reaching a decision.

"The defendant admits to taking the office of First Citizen. Was this his own idea? He claims not and, while the prosecution contests this claim, it can only speculate as to his intentions in acceding to the office. Did he do so to protect his remaining crew as best he could, or simply to protect himself? Can he be held responsible for the deaths of members of his crew in the arena if he himself did not officiate, as he claims? How much responsibility did he retain once his crew was dispersed into the local communities? It could be argued that those who died in the arena would not have done so had they not been ordered to beam down to the planet's surface. However, if the Beagle were beyond repair they would have died if they had remained aboard.

"The audio broadcast cites the defendant as being a principal force behind the persecution of - or resistance to - the son-worshippers. Such actions would probably have been taken by anyone in his office, particularly if, as the defendant claims, they were dictated by the Pro-consul in any case. The fact that action was taken against them is certainly not interference. The way in which the action was directed by the defendant - if it was - might be. That is the question you should consider. Whether your sympathies lie with the son-worshippers or not is immaterial.

"Why did the defendant try to persuade the landing-party from the U.S.S. Enterprise to bring the remainder of its crew down to the planet? Was it a desperate attempt to protect himself and his position? Or was it that he feared contamination from outside if the Enterprise carried word of the planet's existence elsewhere? Starfleet policy and Federation law forbid such contamination, but there are always those who oppose these ideals and argue that Starfleet should be used to bring the benefits of our civilisation to other worlds and peoples - even at the cost of destroying a potential culture better suited to the native population, possibly a better society than our own. Others are simply extreme pressure groups seeking converts - I can think of some that would have demanded help for the son-worshippers. True, such groups have been largely prevented from doing any lasting damage, thanks to Starfleet's vigilance, but the threat remains." He sat up straight and took a deep breath.

"It is a long time since I have seen a case argued quite so passionately by both counsels, or with such apparent sincerity. True, Mr. Cogley has a reputation for theatrics, though we have seen little of them here, and Prosecutor Herrin is known for her fervent belief in the rule of law for the sake of the people. The defendant has been portrayed by the prosecution as a self-seeking adventurer out for personal gain, and by the defence as a helpless victim of circumstances who did his best. In this courtroom, we have seen the defendant in the witness chair giving his evidence quite confidently and lucidly. Can we judge the character of the man

from his performance in this courtroom alone, or should we believe that his displacement from the Federation would significantly affect his behaviour patterns? That is what you must now decide, members of the jury. You will now retire to consider your verdict. The court will adjourn until further notice."

"All rise!" the bailiff ordered as Gabriel stood up and departed from the room. The jury shuffled out towards the jury room, followed by a guard and Merik was escorted back to his cell, accompanied by Cogley. The public gallery emptied around Kirk, Spock and McCoy as they waited for Areel Shaw and Idra Herrin. The prosecutor looked calm and composed as she left her seat and managed a smile as the three rose to meet her.

"Well, that's that," she declared. "We've done our bit. Now it depends on the jury and Gabriel."

"Glad to get it over with?" asked Kirk.

"I'm satisfied that I've done what I can," Herrin replied, smiling at Spock, who nodded.

"I do not believe that anyone could have done better," the Vulcan assured her.

"I wonder what Sam's saying to Merik right now?" Areel Shaw pondered.

"Maybe he's telling him not to sign any long-term contracts," suggested Kirk. "Come on, let's get out of here. I have to check in with the Enterprise and make sure Scotty hasn't completely rebuilt her."

Cogley waited at the entrance to the cell while the force-field was switched on.

"There's no point in worrying any more," he advised. "Nothing more we can do but wait."

"Did you get any feedback from the jury's expressions?" Merik asked.

"I gave up trying to read jury members' faces after my first case. Some of them might as well be Vulcans. Others look outraged about something, but it could just be that they didn't get breakfast this morning. Gabriel argued it all through pretty fairly. On that basis, we should have a good chance. I have to go. I'll look in on you again if I hear anything, or you can have the guard call me if necessary. See you around."

"Scotty, I didn't know the energiser was even scratched, let alone in need of replacement," Kirk protested.

"Well, sir, the new one's a beauty and she works fine," came the unabashed reply. "I worked in a few wrinkles of my own in the design."

"Just reassure me the service and maintenance, as you insist on calling it, will be finished before I return."

"I'll make sure of that, sir. Don't you worry."

"I worry every time I get a progress report. Kirk out."

"Having trouble?" asked Areel Shaw.

"Nothing I wasn't half-expecting anyway. Come on, let's get out to the pool and join the others."

The base swimming pool was relatively empty of people and Herrin was already backstroking towards the deep end. Spock and McCoy were arguing as Uhura dipped her toes in the shallow end.

"I swim because I enjoy it, Spock. The exercise is just a fringe benefit. Now, if you won't try it with me, let me get on with it."

"Doctor, I did not say I would not try it. I simply see little practical value in such a device. However, I confess to a certain intellectual curiosity."

"Poppycock! You're itching to give it a try. So follow me. Hi, Jim, Areel," he added as they approached. "See you in the water!"

McCoy and Spock disappeared from view for a few moments, while Kirk dived into the pool and Areel followed him. Shortly afterwards, they heard McCoy's voice give a yell of childish glee as he came hurtling down the water-slide. A minute later, Spock silently retraced his route, somehow managing to maintain his dignity as he hit the pool recess with a loud splash.

"Well, Spock, what do you think?" asked McCoy, grinning broadly.

"Most inefficient," replied Spock. "A straight, uninterrupted passage would be much better."

"But not as much fun," countered McCoy. "I'm going on it again."

"Come on, Spock," said Kirk, popping up behind them. "We'll race you to the other end."

"Is it urgent that we get there?" asked Spock, raising an eyebrow.

"Just do it, Spock. I'll enjoy the challenge."

"Count me in," added Uhura. "If junior officers are allowed."

"None of us has any rank showing," replied Kirk. "Unless Spock has stripes on his trunks."

"They're plain black," replied McCoy, "of course." He swam over to the side and went to have another slide.

"Everyone ready?" asked Kirk, who was. "On your marks - "

"What marks?" asked Spock, looking around him.

"Just get ready," replied Shaw. "Is he always this literal?"

"I think he does it on purpose," said Kirk. "Ready... Go!" he finished, launching himself forward as he said it. He swam strongly towards the shallow end, setting a good pace, while Spock progressed ergonomically through the water with hardly a ripple. However, they were both nonplussed to find Uhura waiting for them when they arrived.

"Did I ever tell you about my days at the Academy, Captain?" she asked sweetly. "I was runner-up in the freestyle competition two years running."

"You could have waited for me," said Areel Shaw, arriving at that moment.

"What, and lose the race?" asked Kirk sardonically.

"What race?" asked Herrin, appearing behind him. "And who won?"

"I did," said Uhura cheerfully.

"Whreeeeeeee..." Splash! McCoy went down the slide again. The others continued swimming until someone mentioned that it was dinner time. Kirk was first out of the pool and into the drier.

"I brought you a book to read," said Cogley. "I thought you might want a change from those tape things."

"Thanks," Merik replied. "I don't suppose you hid a file in the spine, or anything, did you?"

"Firstly, that would be sacrilege, and secondly you can't file through a force-field. Besides, I'm pretty confident you won't need to."

"They're taking their time over it."

"It's been six hours, taking into account that they'll have stopped to eat and sleep."

"At least they can sleep. It's not easy in here."

"Any more nightmares?" asked Cogley concernedly.

"No, not for the last couple of days. When this is all over, maybe they'll stop altogether."

A signal buzzed on the wall outside the cell and the guard turned to answer it. He nodded at the screen then beckoned Cogley over and muttered something. Cogley turned to Merik.

"The jury are ready to go back in. I'll wait here and go in with you."

The communicator signal woke Areel Shaw and she answered it sleepily.

"Shaw here. Oh hell," she said, switching the visual signal off quickly. "What is it?"

"The jury is returning to court," announced the bailiff stiffly. "Please be there by oh-

nine-thirty hours, local time."

"Acknowledged," replied Areel, becoming wide awake. She shook Kirk awake and relayed the news as she started to dress.

"How long did it take them?" Kirk asked.

"About six hours. I wish I knew if that was good or bad."

"Do we have time for breakfast?"

"You do, if you want to miss the verdict. I don't."

The members of the jury meandered back into their seats as the public gallery began to fill up. Merik and Cogley watched them closely, the former looking for clues as to the verdict. Gabriel appeared and made his way to his chair. The bailiff, who was pointedly not looking at Areel Shaw, ordered everyone to rise. Gabriel sat down and indicated that the others could follow suit.

"Members of the jury, have you reached your verdicts?" he asked.

The foreman of the jury, the woman named as Gerda Walenska, stood up and faced the judge.

"We have, your honour," she replied.

"Mr. Clerk, we will hear the verdicts now," Gabriel instructed. The clerk of the court stood and addressed Gerda Walenska.

"Please state as I ask, for each charge, your verdict and the margin if guilty by a majority."

The woman nodded her acknowledgement and the clerk went on.

"On the first charge, violation of the Prime Directive, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty." A gasp of surprise came from the public gallery and the murmuring was ordered into silence.

"On the second charge, that of negligence, resulting in loss of vessel, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"On the third charge, that of encouraging cultural interference, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"On the fourth charge, that of interference in the planet's culture, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"On the fifth charge, that of contributing to the deaths of crew members, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"By ten to two: guilty."

The murmur that greeted this verdict took three calls to silence.

"On the sixth charge, that of attempting to encourage others to violate Starfleet and Federation laws, do you find the accused guilty or not guilty?"

"By eleven to one: guilty."

Those gathered in the public gallery were obviously struggling to keep silent and the clerk acknowledged the verdicts.

"The verdicts are so entered. The jury may now step down. You are all excused jury service for five years."

"May it please the court," Gerda Walenska announced. "We wish it known that on the fifth charge we find the defendant negligent rather than guilty of wilful contribution. On the sixth charge we believe that no conscious malice was involved."

"I shall take those remarks into account," replied Gabriel. "Members of the jury, you have discharged your duty conscientiously and are now dismissed."

The jury rose and left the court as Gabriel turned to face Merik.

"The defendant will please rise," ordered the clerk.

Cogley and Merik rose to their feet as Gabriel cleared his throat.

"Robert Mattheus Merik, you have been found guilty of contributing, by negligence, to the deaths of members of your crew, and of attempting, albeit with the best intentions, to encourage others to violate Federation and Starfleet laws. Have you anything to say?"

"Only that I did as I thought best at the time, Your Honour," Merik replied.

"Yes, you said that before. It is now my duty to pass sentence on you. Since the verdicts are both those of a majority, you are spared the severest sentence recommended. I have had time to consider what punishment would be effective or merited for each of the charges brought. I believe that your judgement was severely at fault when you met the men from the Enterprise, possibly due to your long stay on the planet and the concomitant acclimatisation you would have undergone.

"It is the sentence of this court that you be held in detention for a period of thirty standard days and that after that time you allow yourself to undergo a course of mental therapy with an approved practitioner until you are judged fit to remain in society without such therapy. Should you fail to meet this requirement, you will be apprehended and sent to a rehabilitation centre for therapy there.

"You are forbidden to travel to any planet with a culture lower than class A-minus on the Richter scale, or any solar system containing such a planet. Your master's licence is to be

reduced to interplanetary status only and you are forbidden contact with any close relatives of other members of the crew of the S.S. Beagle. Failure to comply with any of these restrictions will result in your being sent to a rehabilitation colony for an unspecified period.

"You are also ordered to pay a fine of one thousand, five hundred credits within ten days or face a further thirty days detention. Since you have already spent thirty days in custody before and during these proceedings, you may leave this court unguarded, as long as you report your residential address to the authorities until your therapy is completed. This court is now adjourned."

Gabriel left the court swiftly as Merik breathed out slowly. He shook hands with Cogley as the bailiff declared the proceedings closed and the public began to leave.

Herrin looked satisfied with the result, if not actually pleased. She watched Merik leave through the public gallery with Sam Cogley and was the first to spot the figure making for them. She stood up to yell a warning, but the assailant had lunged at Merik before she could call out. The attacker prepared to strike again, but Cogley chopped the knife away and it spun across the floor. A guard reached the attacker and held her fast as Merik collapsed to the floor.

"Fetch a doctor! Fetch a doctor!" someone was shrieking.

"I am a doctor!" McCoy snapped. "Get out of my way. Give me some room here." He crouched to examine Merik's injuries as guards appeared and ushered the others out. The young woman who'd attacked Merik was taken away as McCoy assessed the damage done.

"Stab wound, back of the right lung," the doctor reported. "He's lucky it wasn't his heart. I'll do what I can here, then he'll have to go for surgery - I'll go with him. Now someone call an emergency team."

Cogley nodded and went to a communicator.

McCoy came out of the base sickbay and found Kirk and the others waiting for him.

"He's going to make it," he told them, sounding almost disappointed. "Did anyone find out who attacked him? It wasn't the Duchinski woman was it?"

"Her?" demanded Herrin. "She'd have missed him completely. No, it was William Harrison's sister, Tina. She's been sitting quietly watching the whole thing, apparently, waiting for her chance."

"And Merik finally gave it to her when he walked through the crowd," Kirk observed. "I suppose she'll be sent for trial next."

"I don't think the prosecution will be too hard on her," replied Herrin, smiling. "I think the court will be sympathetic. She should be back at Starfleet Academy before too long."

"Starfleet Academy?" Cogley asked.

"Yes, she's just coming up for her fifth year. I suppose Captain Merik will be off to command his interplanetary ship once he's recovered."

"Actually, no," Cogley answered. "The merchant marine acted prematurely in

dismissing him from the service and have had to pay him severance pay as well as some back pay. That should cover his fine and costs at least. And he's apparently had a very interesting offer of a directorship with an entertainment network on the Orion colony, where there is also a very good therapist. He's giving it serious consideration."

"I think I need a drink," said Herrin. "Anyone care to join me?"

"I must decline, I'm afraid," replied Cogley. "I have a client's defence to prepare."

"Anyone we know?" asked Areel Shaw.

"You may have seen her - a young woman in her fifth year at Starfleet Academy. Nice to have met you all again, gentlemen, Miss. Shaw. Prosecutor, until we meet again!"

As Cogley left, Kirk turned to follow Herrin and nearly collided with Ensign Hava.

"Captain," she addressed him, "would you and your First Officer please report to Commodore Rehas immediately?"

"There goes our drink. See you later, Bones, Areel."

McCoy smiled winningly. "Have either of you ever tried a Finagle's Folly?" he asked as they strode towards the bar.

"Prepare to take sensor... What the hell was that?"

"Meteorite hit us amidships, Captain. Warp drive is down and we're losing power fast. Outer and inner hull breached on deck two, section F-three."

"Seal off that section, effect repairs."

"We'll need a lot of iridium, Captain, no spares in stock."

"Weren't there iridium deposits on the next planet? Take us there and put us in orbit..."

"Don't move, barbarian, or you'll end up the same way..."

"We could have escaped, set up somewhere, but you sold us out..."

"You don't understand, Harrison. We've no choice..."

"...killed the last of the barbarians, William B. Harrison, in a splendid example of..."

"Robert, you can wake up now," said a voice.

Merik opened his eyes and found the therapist looking down at him. She looked concerned.

"Did I say something I shouldn't?" he asked.

"No, quite the contrary. I'll be giving you your therapy until you leave Starbase Two. Do you know where you're going yet?"

"I'll be here until my finances are sorted out and this heals. Then I'll be leaving for the Orion colony."

She pulled a face. "Sooner you than me. Anyway, I can recommend a colleague there for you to continue therapy. You'll need it for some time yet."

"Come on, Bones, we have to go," Kirk informed the doctor.

"So soon?" McCoy asked, talking slowly and carefully. "Where are we going?"

"Back to the Enterprise. Commodore Rehas has given us our next assignment," Kirk grimaced. "Conveying a load of ambassadors and their staffs to some conference. I'll probably be bored stiff before we get there."

"Where's Spock?"

"He and Uhura beamed up to get the ship ready to leave as soon as we arrive. Well, Areel, I guess this is goodbye, again."

"Let's hope we see each other again soon," she replied and kissed him.

"Goodbye, Captain Kirk, Doctor," said Idra Herrin. "Thanks for all your help."

"Any time, Prosecutor," replied Kirk.

"My pleasure, ma'am," said McCoy and kissed her hand. Kirk led him out into the corridor and out of the building. He opened his communicator.

"Kirk to Enterprise."

"Spock here, Captain."

"Two to beam up. Take us out of orbit as soon as we're aboard."

"Acknowledged."

The hum of the transporter sounded and the two men beamed back to the Enterprise. The ship left orbit and headed on its new course for Babel, via Andor, Tellar and Vulcan.

